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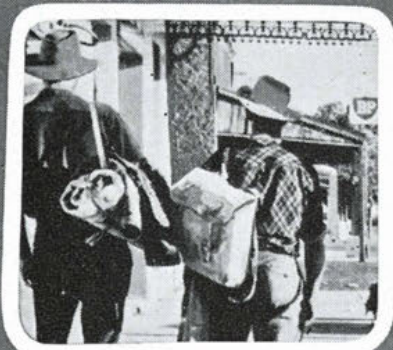
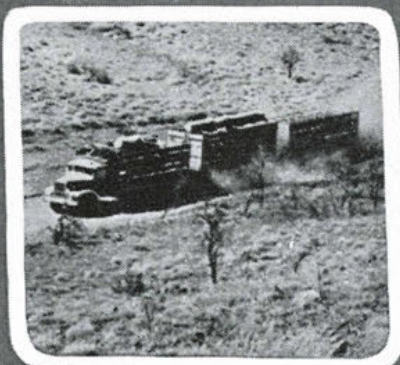
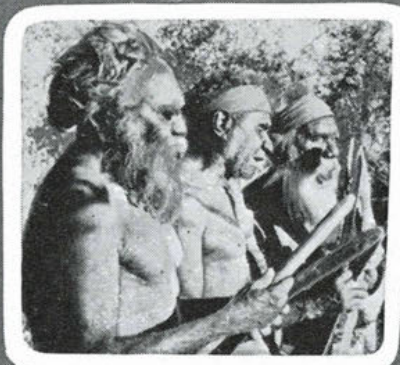
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SIGHT AND SOUND

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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THE FRONT PAGE

ALITTLE LATER THIS YEAR, the National Film Theatre celebrates its tenth birthday: five years in its original building, the 1951 Festival's Telekinema, and five years in its permanent theatre, now itself looking rather like a fortified outpost on the edge of the LCC building scheme. Rather surprisingly, the Film Theatre, with its elaborate pattern of programming, is still virtually unique in the world. The combination of special seasons (Renoir, Lang, the propaganda film), Archive revivals and first showings of continental and other films remains the theatre's own distinctive formula.

Around it, however, the whole continental film scene has changed drastically, and presumably permanently, during the NFT's ten years of tenure. So far as new films are concerned, it must now look further afield for its programmes. In 1951, a total of 44 foreign-language pictures was reviewed in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*; and, at this very early stage in the history of the 'X' certificate, 5 of them rated it. By 1956 the total number of films was 78 and the 'X' certificate went to 24. And in 1961 there were 137 films, with 59 'X' certificates. In ten years, in fact, the total has more than trebled; in only five years it has come near to doubling itself. There seems no reason to suppose that the trend will not continue upwards.

A primary reason is the shortage of American product, which also explains the big Hollywood companies' recent policy of extensive reissues. Another, not insignificant, factor has been the pronounced shift in popular taste, going with the spread of continental holidays, the fashion for everything Italian, from clothes to cars to film starlets. In sheer newspaper acreage, Claudia Cardinale, few of whose films have yet reached this country, must be running the Monroes and Hepburns pretty close. Whether or not we go into the Common Market, we have undeniably moved a long way towards Europe in recent years, in the cinema as elsewhere. Although the number of films that manage to jump the gap from specialised cinemas to general release remains extremely small, it is partly the specialised cinema itself which has become the fashion. There is an obvious attraction about something which is hard to get into; and people would rather queue at, say, the tiny Paris Pullman than sit in lonely isolation in one of the big, half-empty Odeons.

In business terms, of course, the continental film market remains a very limited one. Hard as it is, in this area, to come by actual figures, one gathers that any distributor who gave a guarantee of £5,000 or more in acquiring a picture for the non-general release market would consider that he had made a very sizeable investment. The business, too, is highly speculative and uncertain. It takes the most careful selling and promotion to score the kind of successes registered by a *L'Avventura*, a *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, a *Rocco and his Brothers*. Yet, for all that promoters in this field need to know a good deal more about their wares than those who

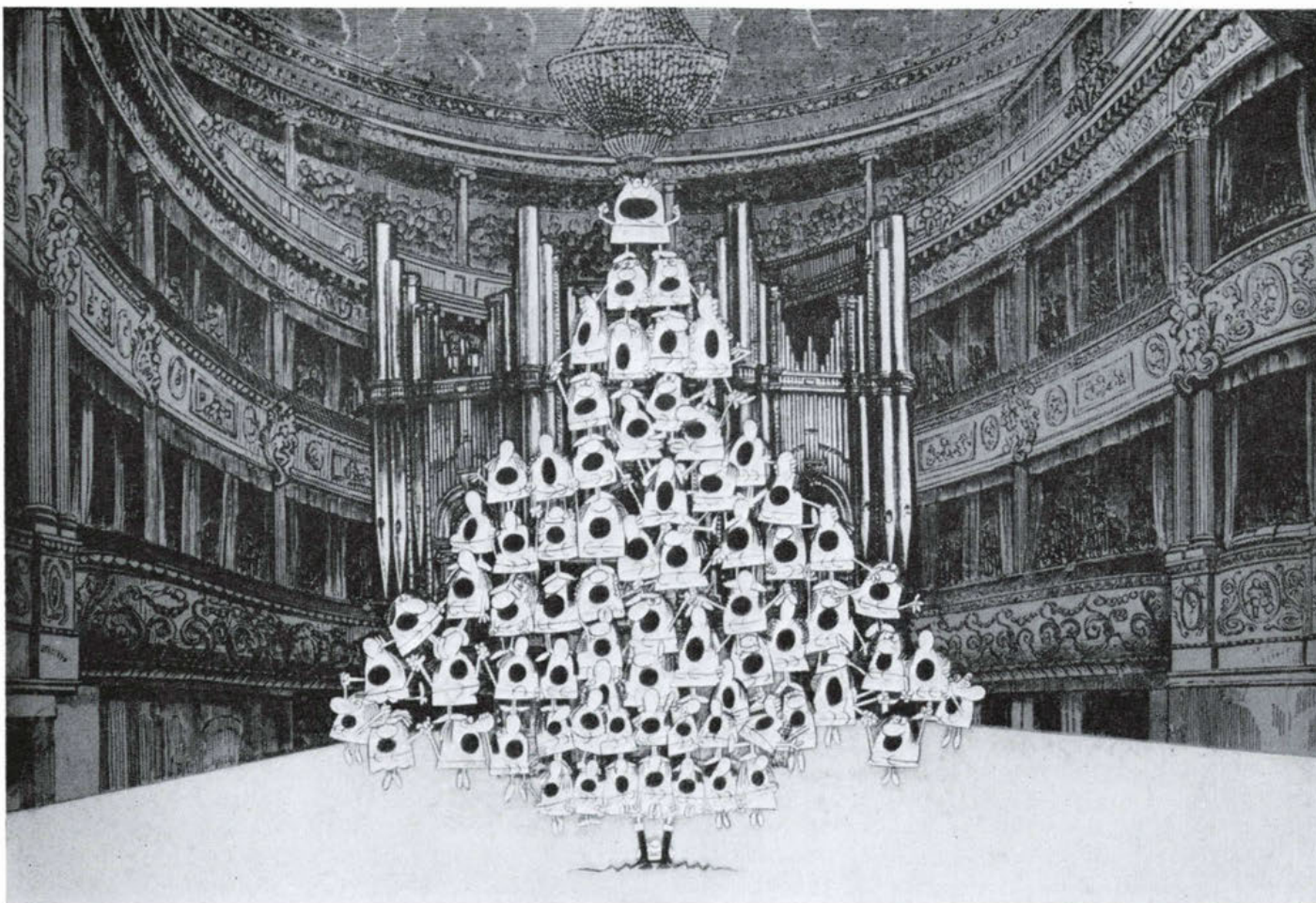
have simply to deal in the latest English-language spectacular, there is no kind of guarantee that the trick can be pulled off again with the next Antonioni or Resnais or Visconti.

The risks are sizeable, many of the firms involved are small, and three or four expensive flops in a row could probably put some of them out of business. But there are also rewards. Gala, in what might be called the chain store division, have their own formula for blending profitable trash with quality films. George Hoellering's Academy Cinema, the only one in London outside the NFT which would put out two such films as *Jalsaghar* and *The Lady with the Little Dog* in a single programme, consistently proves that a combination of personal taste and discreet selling (the Academy's press hand-outs are models of informativeness) can do the trick.

Some cut-throat dealing has been going on lately in the specialised film business, mostly to the benefit of the public. A few years ago, the time-lag between the showing of a film at a foreign festival and its eventual arrival in London might run into years rather than months. However uncommercial a film's chances may be, its proprietors are likely to persuade themselves that they have a winner on their hands. Large guarantees will consequently be asked for; and the English distributors have often held off, rightly confident that the price would in due course come down. Now, however, films are being snapped up much more rapidly; and the result is that they are reaching London, on occasion, before the end of their first runs in Paris or Rome.

This is all to the good as far as the audience is concerned, and has to do with the particular nature of the specialised film trade. Films in general have been treated for too long as standard commodities, dumped on the market with the same relentlessly unimaginative advertising, the same jaded promotion stunts. Although, naturally, there are tie-ups between foreign and British companies, which may mean that a British specialised distributor has to take something he doesn't particularly want in order to get the film he has his eye on, here the deals are far more in terms of individual pictures. Within their limited range, the specialised exhibitors and distributors have been giving the big companies lessons in selling.

The film distribution system, with the Anglo-American connections, the circuit cinemas committed to the films they are given, the weekly programme changes, has been a stratified one. The specialised cinemas have remained on the fringe, representing a tiny fraction of the market. As the total audience continues to fall away, while the specialised section of it still advances, their share looks decidedly more worth bothering about. At the moment, in fact, the situation seems wide open: this is the section of the industry in which we can expect to see speculation, because here, for the speculator, is still the lure of the rising market.



THE SHORT FILM SITUATION

AN ENQUIRY BY DEREK HILL

THIS ENQUIRY INTO THE situation of the short film maker in Britain sprang initially from several attempts at answering organisers, critics and producers at the shorts film festivals held at Tours last November and at Oberhausen in March. Why, they wanted to know, was only one British film—Biographic's *Do-It-Yourself Cartoon Kit*—shown in competition at both festivals? In fact I was as puzzled as anyone why we should be so outnumbered by American, French, Italian, German, Dutch, Belgian and even Danish entries. At Oberhausen I discovered that a selection of British shorts had been offered by the standing Film Festivals Committee of the Association of Specialised Film Producers. Two Halas and Batchelor cartoons were ruled out when John Halas became a member of the jury. Greenpark's *Mikhali* and John Krish's refugee film *Return to Life* were both so familiar to the organisers from half-a-dozen festivals over the previous two years that they felt they could hardly accept them. Apart from the Biographic cartoon, this left *The State Opening of Parliament* as our entry to a festival recognised for its annual efforts at discovering all that is most fresh and vigorous in short production. The festival authorities turned it down and instead

invited the submission of Denis Mitchell's *Morning in the Streets*. It appeared in the programme but not on the screen, as the film failed to arrive.

Back in London, I asked the Association of Specialised Film Producers for their comments. Tours, they said, didn't interest them very much; and they couldn't agree that either Tours or Oberhausen was the leading shorts festival. The Venice documentary festival seemed to them decidedly more important. Their Oberhausen entry was restricted by the fact that they had already sent a selection to Mannheim which could not be shown again in Germany. Moreover, they objected to Oberhausen's practice of inviting entries direct from certain producers when they spent their whole time on festival selection, looking at more than a hundred shorts a year. "We offered Oberhausen a very good selection," said the Secretary. He visits Venice's documentary festival, but neither he nor his assistant attend other festivals.

The strength of the American entry at Oberhausen lay in what the local U.S.I.S. representative agitatedly denounced as

Above: Dick Williams' commercial "Guinness at the Albert Hall".

anti-Americanism. (His chief complaint was that the organisers had rejected a short showing the Gospel Choir of Salt Lake City.) It was hard to imagine any of these anxious, suspicious or defiant fringe productions (Dan Drasin's *Sunday*, Marvin Starkman's *The American Way*) surviving the sieve of an official selection committee. How much chance is there in this country for the nonconformist picture to get through? (*Every Day Except Christmas*, it may be remembered, was at first rejected by the A.S.F.P. for Venice, where it finally won the Grand Prix.) Wasn't there a risk, I suggested, that the Committee would see to it that we were only represented by the safe, conformist production? "Not at all," the Secretary assured me. "We selected *The Alder Woodwasp and its Insect Enemies* for the Scientific and Didactic section at Pædua, and that was made on 16 mm. by two members of the Forestry Department at Oxford University. It got the Grand Prix."

The A.S.F.P. can point to an impressive enough list of prizes won by their entries to various festivals, particularly Venice and Vancouver, though it's noticeable that most of our award winners are specialised in one sense or another. British shorts earn their laurels in fairly tight categories—"fine arts," "industry and commerce," "instructional," "sports films," "newsreel award" and so on. And only one film among those on the A.S.F.P.'s list is unsponsored: Peter Finch's independent production *The Day*. Despite this, the A.S.F.P.'s Secretary feels that "Britain has one of the best short film outputs in the world."

Statistically the situation looks sufficiently healthy. Between eighty and ninety companies are making 35 mm. documentaries, and there are thirty-three animation production companies. About 250-300 British shorts (i.e., under 3,000 feet) are registered annually by the Board of Trade, and these do not include sub-standard productions or films restricted to specialised showing.

But there are two aching gaps in the short film business. One is the sparse commercial distribution given to shorts, whether they are routine or off-beat, documentary or cartoon. The other, a natural result of the thin chances of exhibition, is the almost total absence of unsponsored shorts. Almost every short film is made to sell something; and only in the rare cases—the National Union of Teachers, Ford, Shell—are prestige and goodwill the commodities in mind.

Shorts and second features are the traditional training grounds for tomorrow's feature directors. But second features, with the rare exception, are so relentlessly ground out that individuality becomes the least acceptable ingredient. So it's in shorts that we generally expect to find signs of good things to come. There are, after all, any number of precedents. In the early Twenties a thriving shorts industry in Germany and the U.S.S.R. was in each case followed by a renaissance in the national cinema. Grierson's documentary school here led towards the best achievements of the British wartime cinema. Many of the *nouvelle vague* directors began in short films. And Free Cinema is having its impact on the current British feature scene.

The names of European film-makers who began in this field make a striking list: Antonioni, Olmi, Franju, Truffaut, Resnais, Malle, Godard, Baratier, Reichenbach, Varda, Demy, Rouch, Rozier, Molinaro, Haanstra, Peter Weiss, Robert Menegoz. At home the four directors whose work has done most to make today's British feature outlook so hopeful—Karel Reisz, John Schlesinger, Jack Clayton and Tony Richardson—each directed at least one short before their first features. And Lindsay Anderson's first feature is soon to come.

* * *

Quite apart from the obvious advantage to any industry of a shorts section offering real scope to directors of talent, the short film itself can be an extraordinarily rich form. Imagine a

cinema without an *Hôtel des Invalides*, a *Time Out of War*, an *O Dreamland*. To an English critic, one of the mysteries of Tours and Oberhausen was the endless presentation of costly, even lavish, continental shorts on which everyone concerned seemed to have had all the freedom they wanted within a running time chosen to suit themselves rather than exhibitors' dictates. These short dramas, comedies and experiments were designed to sell nothing and no one. They were made with the innocent assumption that it is as natural to be able to produce, market and show a short as it is a feature.

Above all, the atmosphere among the film-makers was one of driving enthusiasm. Here the directors of shorts I have talked to during the last few weeks are no longer even angry. Frustration and bitterness seem to most of them inevitable elements in their work. "I wouldn't say I feel apathetic," said Derek York. "I suppose 'inured' is more the word." York directed the widely praised *Festival* in 1951. Since then he has been an associate producer, an editor, has directed what he calls "a bit of government stuff" and a few commercials. He has survived financially through bursts of highly paid work over short periods. "We used to talk about the sponsor," he says. "Today we talk about the client." He believes that the only unsponsored shorts which can get their money back are nudist two-reelers.

John Krish, director of *I Want to Go to School* and *Our School*, has been comparatively busy for someone who declares, "I can't get worked up about nuts and bolts any more—I've made my nuts and bolts films." He has directed eight sponsored shorts over the past four years. Apart from the two for the National Union of Teachers, these are *Counterpoint*, a Post Office public relations film which has the odd distinction of being banned by the Postmaster General (or, rather, allowed to be shown only when a G.P.O. official is present to add his own comments), *They Took Us to the Sea*, for the N.S.P.C.C., *Mr. Marsh Comes to School*, for the Ministry of Labour, *Return to Life*, made for World Refugee



Lost child in John Schlesinger's "Terminus".

Year, and two films for the Council of Europe, *What's the Price?* and *What's the Time?* Krish also directed the anti-apartheid film *Let My People Go*, which was financed largely by an appeal fund. The eight sponsored productions would have kept Krish and his family (he has three children) for about a year. Payment for a script, including all the research entailed, averages about £120, and the fee for direction, including supervision through the editing stages, about twice that, although it can be as low as £100. A shorts film-maker choosy about his subjects can only survive by also directing commercials, where £100 for a day's work is far from rare.

Krish was recently offered a five-year feature contract by Associated British and went to Greece looking for locations for his first production, a Cliff Richard musical, before disagreement over certain clauses led him to refuse the contract. So his next film will be another short—a privately financed study of old age.

Guy Brenton, who co-directed *Thursday's Children* with Lindsay Anderson, feels he has been lucky to make four films in the past five years. He found it psychologically impossible to work within the film industry on whatever subjects were offered him, and instead set up his own company, Morse Films. He has directed *People Apart* for the British Epilepsy Association, *The Vision of William Blake* for the B.F.I. Experimental Film Fund, *Four People* for the Polio Research Fund, and *Via Crucis*, a short on the nature of suffering commissioned by Group Captain Leonard Cheshire.

Basil Wright, solitary survivor as a shorts director from the documentary school of the Thirties, still produces the occasional privately financed picture, such as *Greece, The Immortal Land* and *Greek Sculpture*. Paul Dickson's most recent work, on the other hand, has been as dialogue director with Anatole Litvak on *Goodbye Again* and *Five Miles to Midnight*. Stephen Peet, who made *A Far Cry* for the Save the Children Fund, now works for BBC Television, directing such documentaries as *Murder by Neglect* and *The Unforgotten*. John Fletcher, responsible for so much of the editing and sound recording on many Free Cinema productions, is completing *The Professionals*, which he directed as the third in Ford's "Look at Britain" series; but he predicts a rag-bag future of commercials and routine sponsored shorts. Jack Gold, approached by Karel Reisz a couple of years ago to direct one of the "Look At Britain" films, turned down the chance simply because it would have meant leaving the BBC for the sake of a single film without the faintest prospect of anything to follow. "After the Ford picture, it could have been the wilderness," he says.

If the position for the director of shorts is hazardous, that of the rare producer still investing in them seems utterly doomed. Two companies, Biographic Cartoon Films and Triangle Film Productions, are contemplating feature work as a result of finding it impossible to cover their costs on British-made shorts. Biographic made *The Do-It-Yourself Cartoon Kit* for less than £1,000, but despite British Lion's distribution it hasn't yet retrieved its cost. Their current film, a live-action production called *The Plain Man's Guide to Advertising*, was held up for money after they had spent £2,000 on it, until the National Film Finance Corporation made its completion possible by a £3,000 loan. Even so, Bob Godfrey says that this will be Biographic's last short: "We're being forced into B-picture production by the sheer economics of the set-up."

Triangle Film Productions, the only member of the A.S.F.P. engaged exclusively on unsponsored production, survives solely because of the wide distribution given to its films overseas. Theodora Olembert, head of Triangle and producer of eighteen shorts, explains that a number of her films qualify as both British and French and are able to take full advantage of the continental market and the French prize system. Her *Chopin* and *Teiva* have each been awarded a *prix à la qualité* of 10,000 N.F. Neither has been given any commercial showing here. Her *Chinese Theatre* has had no British bookings since its run with *The Connection* at the Academy. *The Tragic*

Pursuit of Perfection, on the life and work of Leonardo da Vinci, has scarcely been seen since its Curzon screening. "British shorts get a wider distribution in Denmark than they do in their own country," says Mme. Olembert. Like other producers, she hopes that the Common Market may give a new impetus.

An interview with John Halas published recently in *The Times* indicated how the Halas and Batchelor organisation contrived to make a cartoon like *For Better, For Worse*. There are actually two versions, only one of which reveals that this film was in fact sponsored by Philips Radio. This 11-minute cartoon cost about £10,000; and John Halas says that but for the sponsor he couldn't have expected more than £4,000 back—and even this would be optimistic. All his unsponsored films except two have lost money. The exceptions: the 3-D *Owl and the Pussycat* and *The History of the Cinema*, made six years ago and just recovering its cost.

The B.F.I.'s Experimental Film Fund has received a gross distribution revenue of a little over £9,000 during its ten years of existence, the total income from the 24 films it has financed. Of these 24, only two have recovered their costs—*Momma Don't Allow*, whose £500 budget could have been multiplied six times if normal union crewing conditions had not been waived, and *Leonardo da Vinci*, made for £2,775 and just breaking even after six years, largely as a result of print sales to art schools and universities and the showing of a number of extracts on television. Only the fact that there is no B.F.I. charge for distribution (usually 40 per cent) has enabled these two films to show a profit.

* * *

Perhaps the most sobering story of "successful" short production is that of Dick Williams. He worked on his idea for *The Little Island* for six months in Spain, found someone who agreed to back it and came to London with £50, convinced that the development of commercial television would enable him to support himself while he worked on the cartoon. He pursued the backer to Germany only to find that the hoped for finance would not materialise, then came back to London, where he spent six months out of work. He eventually found work with companies making TV commercials, and was able to make use of their animation equipment to start *The Little Island*. Estimating that the cartoon would cost about £5,000 to make, he approached the Experimental Film Fund for a grant. Although he was awarded £500 he finally decided for various reasons to turn it down.

About this time Williams met Tristram Cary, who wrote the music for the film and enthusiastically helped to steer it through the remaining difficulties. Advised to set up his own company, Williams took what later proved to be the disastrous step of organising a company to make *The Little Island* and supporting this company through his own outside earnings. As a result, he found that he had made himself liable to double taxation—his income being taxed once as freelance earnings and again as company income.

He used a life insurance policy to secure a bank overdraft of £500, and then obtained a further bank loan of £2,000, plus £500 to cover the original overdraft. For this Cary, now a partner in the company, offered £1,000 in securities related to his house, while another friend put up £1,300 in securities. Cary and Williams each loaned another £400 in cash to their company, which had already taken about £5,000 of Williams's earnings. Neither of them, Williams ruefully admits, were business men. The actual cost of the production was finally £8,000, or £10,000 if nominal salaries of £500 to Cary and £1,500 to Williams are included. But double taxation added £5,000 to the bill. Williams paid off everyone connected with the film about a year ago, but has continued working on commercials to make back this £5,000 accumulated in taxes. Altogether, he says, *The Little Island* ate up the best part of seven years of his life—3½ to make it, and 3½ more on work which would pay off everything he owed.

The completed film was championed by Harry Norris, then a Rank executive, who not only persuaded the Organisation to take the film but defended it with the management of the Curzon. At the Odeon, Kensington, *The Little Island* was given a slow hand-clap by an Easter Monday audience and taken off after only one show. It has since been screened at several art houses. Rank recently relinquished the distribution rights, which are now held by Contemporary; and the total return from what Williams says was "a very good deal" with Rank (i.e. 60 per cent plus Eady money) was less than £500.

Williams is now completing his first unsponsored cartoon since *The Little Island—Love Me, Love Me, Love Me*, which goes, he says, "into a hidden area of humour, I think seriously embarrassing." The music is by Peter Shade and the commentary written by Stanley Hayward and spoken by Kenneth Williams. A second film, *Clown Drawings*, which he describes as a "circus portfolio", is also in production. These cartoons are being financed by the profits from commercials; but now everything is done through Williams's company. "That way I don't get hit personally," he says. Although he recently turned down an invitation to direct a live action feature, he may yet break away from animation. "The thing is," he told me seriously, "I'm not really interested in cartoons."

* * *

The genuinely unsponsored short is virtually extinct in this country, with only a few freaks and flukes surviving in an otherwise dead landscape. The reasons are not hard to find. To the circuits, shorts mean Rank's *Look At Life* and ABC's *Pathé Pictorial*, whose continuance owes less to their quality than to the economic convenience for the two main distributors of producing their own shorts. For when a short is shown it is given two-and-a-half times the Eady money. Most films outside these two series are only given the chance of earning two-and-a-half times nothing, simply because they are never shown. The continuing reliance of the industry on the double-feature programme means that the Rank or Pathé filler is quite enough to complete the bill. Where a particularly long feature makes a B-picture out of the question, a British short is in direct competition with any number of cheap American fillers imported in enormous quantities and often sold outright. But the double feature still remains the short film's most obstinate enemy.

British Lion, whose new boldness in distribution has extended to several shorts, confirm the reluctance of the circuits to book even the safest of these. John Schlesinger's multi-award winning *Terminus* went out with *Only Two Can Play*—but not until the feature was on its second (i.e. National) release. Even then, I was told, this release was arranged in the teeth of resistance from the circuit, although exhibitors have since been asking for the film. A British Lion representative assured me that a short which grossed £500 in the United Kingdom would have done very well. A three-reeler might wait two years before it was attached to a suitable long feature. Even a long West End run is no guarantee of a film getting its money back. Peter Sellers' *Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film* enjoyed twelve months in the West End, and during the whole year earned only £300. Spike Milligan's two recent shorts wouldn't cover their costs, as no circuit deal had been possible.

Television presentation at least provides a picture with an audience, though the financial return makes this an impossible outlet for the unsponsored film. A half-hour film may receive only £200 from television, against production costs of anything up to £10,000. And once a film has been shown on television no cinema will touch it. With such sponsored productions as *Our School*, television is clearly an ideal medium, since it offers the sponsor an audience of over ten

Recent documentaries. Above: Robert Vas's "The Vanishing Street", about a Jewish community. Centre: British Transport Films' satire "I am a Litter Basket". Below: Biographic's "The Plain Man's Guide to Advertising".



million on the film's first showing. And the National Film Board of Canada has found that, since Rank introduced *Look at Life*, television can actually be a more economic proposition for a foreign producer not entitled to Eady money. Now they consider themselves lucky to get £100 from the theatrical release of one of their shorts in this country. But *Universe*, already presented three times on BBC television, earned a total of £800 in a single summer. The Film Board estimates that today no more than 500 cinemas in this country want a short film.

Distributors of continental shorts also face a probable loss if the productions they import require an English version. If such a film is in colour they are virtually certain to lose, since the cost of new commentary or subtitles plus a dupe negative and colour prints quite outweighs any possible return. Gala lost on Agnès Varda's *Côté de la Côte*, and are sure that *La Petite Cuillère* won't show them a profit. Contemporaries admit that they are now wary of shorts, since most of our continental cinemas run double feature bills and they can only anticipate twenty to thirty bookings after the West End. And Charles Cooper, head of Contemporary, also suggested that the cost of the 40 or 50 copies needed for a circuit release hardly made even that rare prospect the solution that so many claimed. Under present conditions, he wouldn't finance any short production until the distribution end was more satisfactorily arranged; but, unlike most people I spoke to, he is convinced that something can be done. He believes that a circuit of art houses, each showing a programme of one feature plus one or two shorts and prepared to continue their runs for longer than the usual week when attendance demanded, might revitalise the short film situation—quite apart from its effect on other worrying tendencies in the industry. Moreover, he points to three separate moves being made towards this end. George Hoellering's new cinema on the first floor of the Academy may be the first of a chain of several similar theatres; the B.F.I. is exploring the possibility of local authorities' support; and a public relations concern has shown keen interest. In an issue devoted to shorts the *Motion Picture Herald* recently indicated that a rising American demand was at least partly attributable to the American art house policy of one feature plus shorts, and even referred to "the growing discontent among exhibitors with the double bill policy."

* * *

Are there other alternatives? In the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND Penelope Houston referred to the suggestion in last year's National Film Finance Corporation report that something along the lines of the French prize system might help. It seems worth quoting the Corporation's comments on shorts in full:

"If the plight of the second feature is unhappy, that of the short film is lamentable. This country produces some of the best shorts in the world, many of them for official or industrial sponsors, but the commercial market provides no satisfactory outlet for high-class shorts unless they are made for a large organisation for inclusion in their own programme. An attempt has been made to alleviate this problem by allowing shorts a larger percentage of the statutory levy, but this has provided no real solution. Frequently the Corporation has to reject applications for short films which promise to be excellent entertainment precisely because a loss both for the Corporation and for the producer is a practical certainty. In the absence of any special subsidy from organisations such as the British Film Institute or the Arts Council, the Corporation suggests that consideration might be given to the making of a number of annual awards out of the statutory levy to shorts made by genuinely independent producers on the pattern of the French *prix à la qualité*. Meanwhile the

Corporation has continued to assist a number of short films where especially hopeful conditions obtain."

"Especially hopeful," the N.F.F.C.'s Secretary advised me, might be interpreted as "not as hopeless as usual." He quoted *The Plain Man's Guide to Advertising* as an example. The film already had a distribution guarantee from British Lion, who said that it might just conceivably earn £2,000 overseas. The Corporation, by a generously elastic interpretation of the situation, persuaded themselves that the film could eventually pick up another £1,000 in the U.K., given patience, and, presumably, a few miracles; and with Biographic's previous work in mind, they lent them the £3,000 needed to finish the production. Another "especially hopeful" circumstance would occur if an enterprising shorts producer had arranged a tie-up with the distributor of some outside production like *The Guns of Navarone*; but the Secretary admitted it had hardly ever happened.

"If we said a year ago that the position of shorts was lamentable," he said, "today I can only say it is still more lamentable." He had heard of no attempt by anyone in the industry to act upon the Corporation's suggestion. The introduction of a prize system would require amending legislation to divert a fraction of the levy into a special prize fund; and there is already a precedent for this in the Children's Film Foundation, which receives an annual £150,000 in this way. The Corporation has constantly argued for the levy to be increased to rates which would bring in an annual £5 million. But even last year's yield of £3.9 million could surely tolerate the imposition—if imposition is the word in such circumstances—of the amount required for such a fund. The Secretary, John Terry, spoke of a modest £50,000. I mentioned the figure to Leon Clore, head of Basic Films and another producer glumly convinced that unsponsored production is a thing of the past. "£50,000?" he said. "Say twenty prizes a year of £2,500 each. Yes, in that case it would be worth having a go."

This enquiry could only end where it began, at the Association of Specialised Film Producers. They remembered the N.F.F.C. suggestion, but in the year that had passed none of their members had brought it forward for discussion. "I suppose we've been too preoccupied with other things," said the Secretary. "And not many of our members are concerned with what I can only call speculative production." Aren't they? Biographic, Triangle and Basic are all members of the A.S.F.P. The most promising solution to a situation which so many of them deplore now seems to depend very largely on their own initiative. As Mr. Terry says, the Government will hardly do anything without a recommendation from the industry. And it's difficult to see how the N.F.F.C. could have given a more obvious lead.



"Love Me, Love Me, Love Me", the first unsponsored cartoon made by Dick Williams since "The Little Island".

tom milne / **this**



"This Sporting Life":
Richard Harris and
Rachel Roberts.

life

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IN A RECENT *Cahiers du Cinéma* discussion on criticism, when Morvan Lebesque (citing Ionesco and Beckett as his witnesses) claimed that "the cinema is twenty years behind the theatre," Jacques Rivette was able to pounce back instantly with, "And suppose it was Ionesco who was behind the times?" The exchange is illuminating, for it underlines the pointlessness, in France, of any discussion as to which art, theatre or cinema, is the more progressive. Beckett and Genêt, Resnais and Godard: how can one choose? They move tangentially towards equally relevant, equally challenging goals.

In Britain, the theatre has been doing very nicely over the last five years, rapidly developing into a healthy and provocative movement which can hold its head up against any opposition. In the last two or three years in particular, with

plays like *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*, *The Caretaker*, *The Lion in Love*, *The Knack and Chips With Everything*, it has moved from a sharp but essentially naturalistic Look at Britain towards a free, highly personal, creative scrutiny and formal experiment. Which is just as it should be.

And in the cinema, what have we got? "*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* with Alan Bates in the Finney part." Cheap, journalistic, unfair; all the same, this comment on John Schlesinger's *A Kind of Loving* has an uncomfortably irritant grain of truth in it. First steps first, of course, and God forbid that one should cavil at any attempts, however repetitive, to bolster the splendid isolation of *Room at the Top* and the few which have followed in its path. Of course we want more; of course we are impatient for a home-grown Antonioni, Demy or Resnais; but they are unlikely to emerge until a platform



“... Unable to resolve the problems of his almost manic demands on the woman he loves”: Richard Harris and Rachel Roberts.

has been erected for them to work on. All power and joy, therefore, to such ventures as Tony Richardson's *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, Bryan Forbes' *The L-Shaped Room*, and Joan Littlewood's *Sparrers Can't Sing*, which may be bricks in the first, long, unhurried look at life which will help to build that platform.

Still, the case of Joan Littlewood, making her debut in the cinema, is instructive. Here is a woman who has done more than anybody to bring a shot in the arm to methods of staging in the theatre, provoking a flexibility in the actor and lack of arrogance in the playwright which is quite new. It is quite on the cards that she may, with her characteristic and unforeseeable disregard of the written text, do the same for the cinema. Her stage production of *Sparrers Can't Sing*, a simple tale of working-class life in Stepney, was full of vigour and, unexpectedly, an almost luminous charm, but it is a minor naturalistic play, one of the most conventional that Theatre Workshop has ever produced, in a style which the theatre has long since progressed beyond. None the worse for that, in a sense, but a basic requirement in any art is excitement, and it is always difficult to get excited over something which one has seen before, often better or more accurately done. To say this is not to demand the titivation of novelty, but the stimulation of a fresh viewpoint.

The cinema has a lot of leeway to make up, and it is high time that someone took the final step of throwing off the apron-strings of novel and play, so as to be free to invent a bit of film instead of filming a bit of script. It may not mean better films, but it will almost certainly mean bolder, more exciting, more potential ones. At present the apron-strings have a dual effect. On the one hand they prevent the child from wandering out of sight and getting lost (and in a set-up where a flop means that one is out in the wilderness, this is understandable, even justifiable); on the other, they mean a tiresome restriction. To anyone who knows the play, for

example, the film of *A Taste of Honey* presents a primarily academic interest: has it caught the play? how cinematic is the adaptation? how has such-and-such a scene been done? oh, there's a location shot! And because, finally, the film says the same thing in very much the same way as the play (that is, the film is really signed by Shelagh Delaney rather than Tony Richardson), it is difficult to avoid reflecting that Shelagh Delaney, in the theatre, has already moved on to the more mature, more complex vision of *The Lion in Love*.

* * *

Down at the Beaconsfield Studios, Lindsay Anderson was shooting the interior scenes for his first feature, *This Sporting Life*. On the stage was the set for the Howton Hall sequence, a hotel dining-room all in red plush and gilt, eight or nine tables dotted with diners, waiters in tails, a cocktail bar at one end at the top of a short, ornate flight of stairs. A Rugby League football star (Richard Harris) is treating his working-class widow-with-two-children girl-friend (Rachel Roberts) to a meal at a classy country house hotel. She is uneasy, out of her depth. He, slighted by a waiter, turns with gusto to a bearded diner having a steak cooked at his elbow at the next table, and calls, "Mind you don't singe his whiskers, love." Another case of "*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* with Richard Harris in the Finney part"? I think not.

This Sporting Life is—inevitably—adapted from a novel, by David Storey, which concerns a professional footballer with a Yorkshire Rugby League team who has a love affair with an attractive widow. It bears a distinct family resemblance to that group of North Country novels which stems from *Room at the Top*, but is distinguished by the fact that it concentrates primarily on neither local colour, frustration, social climbing, anger or unrest. Instead it focuses, with considerable power, on the tragedy of a man who achieves his ambition for fame as a footballer, then helplessly steers himself, and the woman he

genuinely loves, to disaster because he is unable to resolve the problems of his own almost manic demands on her. Lindsay Anderson has concentrated on the dark, destructive, almost inexplicable element in the relationship. "Antonioni?" I asked. Wisely, Anderson held his counsel. With reservations, he admires Antonioni, Godard and the rest, but quite rightly feels that one must find one's own path. On one important point he is firm: "*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was a thoroughly objective film," he says, "while *This Sporting Life* is almost entirely subjective."

For this reason he is determined that it should be a stylish film, more formalised than what is usually taken to be the *nouvelle vague* approach, and neither rough-hewn or thrown-together to convey the impression of raw life, nor self-consciously exploiting the new-found glories of location shooting. All of the exteriors, including the important scene of the rugby match (which pushed the budget up to the £200,000 mark, and involved the staging of an impromptu Bingo session to keep the spectators happy while the crowd scenes were being shot) were in fact shot on location at Wakefield; but Anderson went on to say, "I have tried to abstract the film as much as possible so as not to over-emphasise the locations, and keep attention on the situation between the characters." Karel Reisz, who is producing the film, came in on the conversation at this point, evidently from a session viewing rushes. "Yes, Lindsay," he said, "very nice, very nice indeed. Lots of shade and contrast." Anderson brightened perceptibly. Lighting cameraman on the film is Denys Coop, whose work on his first feature, *A Kind of Loving*, was notably perceptive and controlled (an earlier chore was as Oswald Morris's camera operator on *Look Back in Anger*).

The script, by David Storey himself, is a faithful, compressed version of the novel, which has been worked on by Karel Reisz, Anderson, and also Richard Harris, who influenced it considerably, bringing it back much closer to the original. One important alteration from the novel lies in the fact that the sequence already mentioned, where the footballer, Arthur Machin (now renamed Frank, for obvious Arthur Seaton reasons) takes Mrs. Hammond out to dine at Howton Hall, has been transposed to a later point in the film, for reasons of clarity. In the novel, the scene comes early on in their relationship, and is used primarily to illustrate Mrs. Hammond's uneasiness in what she feels is a posh place, and Arthur/Frank's bravado, also slightly uneasy. Here the scene comes later, when the relationship has progressed considerably, and it has been pointed up to demonstrate that Frank is pushing Mrs. Hammond too hard, forcing her to enjoy herself because he wants it that way, trying to envelop her with his personality, and thereby, *in spite of* his genuine love for her, unintentionally destroying the delicate balance of their relationship. In the book this point is never made subjectively, although it is stated objectively (and a little crudely) in a sort of running gag where the footballer is constantly reading novels with titles like *Toreador* and *Champion*, revelling in the women who fall like ninepins before the hero. Now, with the shifted emphasis, the point is made without recourse to the techniques of subjective narrative.

Watching the shooting of this sequence, and Anderson's patient, quiet, meticulous rehearsal of details of timing and expression, I was impressed by the easy, unforced atmosphere of the playing. Obviously the Jimmy Porter-Arthur Seatonish element in Frank has been kept well in hand, and Mrs.

Hammond, outwardly elegant and controlled, betrays her unease by the sharpest of detail: this was to be expected. But, even in films like *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *A Taste of Honey*, there is a tendency, probably pressurised for reasons of box-office, not exactly to caricature, but to *nudge* in the presentation of some of the minor roles. Anderson was rehearsing a shot in which Frank deliberately and irritatingly quibbles over his bill, having it checked and rechecked, finally producing the exact money which he holds ready, and a sixpence which he drops insolently on to the waiter's tray, saying, "Don't spend it all at once." Wallas Eaton, as the waiter, is not permitted even the mildest, subtlest of double-takes; simply a weary, superior glance, which is exactly right. Or again, involving the use of extras, a scene in which Frank, demonstrating to Mrs. Hammond that he is quite at ease in the atmosphere of the dining-room, turns to a table occupied by two business couples and asks, "Did they burn your custard, love?" Again, no "reaction" business from the extras, simply surprise, and then one man turns to mutter a *sotto voce* to his companion.

* * *

Lindsay Anderson readily agrees that a "signature" is essential, that film is, or should be, a language. Of all the directors in, round, behind, or stemming from the Free Cinema movement, he has by far the most recognisable, most personal style. *Every Day Except Christmas*—shown in 1957, and his last work in the cinema before *This Sporting Life*, if one excepts side-ventures like commercials, his collaboration on *March to Aldermaston*, or the wittily filmed insert in his production of Christopher Logue's musical, *The Lily White Boys*—is a simple work, a lyric poem, containing all the qualities and all the limitations which that category implies. Simple, perhaps, to the artists of today, five years later, but as Anderson says, paraphrasing T. S. Eliot's remark, "we always think we know more than the artists of the past, but *they* are what we know." Building on the basis of *Every Day Except Christmas*, and the more caustic preface of *O Dreamland*, Anderson has spent the last few years working mainly in the theatre. One remembers his brilliant production of *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*, mounting from the slow, relentless control of the opening to the final macabre dance of death; the fluid, kaleidoscopic, jazz rhythm of *The Lily White Boys*; and, most recently, the precise, probing, very funny detail of *The Fire Raisers*, ending in his stunning image of the Bomb.

So there is Anderson; and, of course, there is Joan Littlewood's unpredictable habit of departing from the script, disconcerting in the theatre, but in the cinema . . . ? It bodes well.

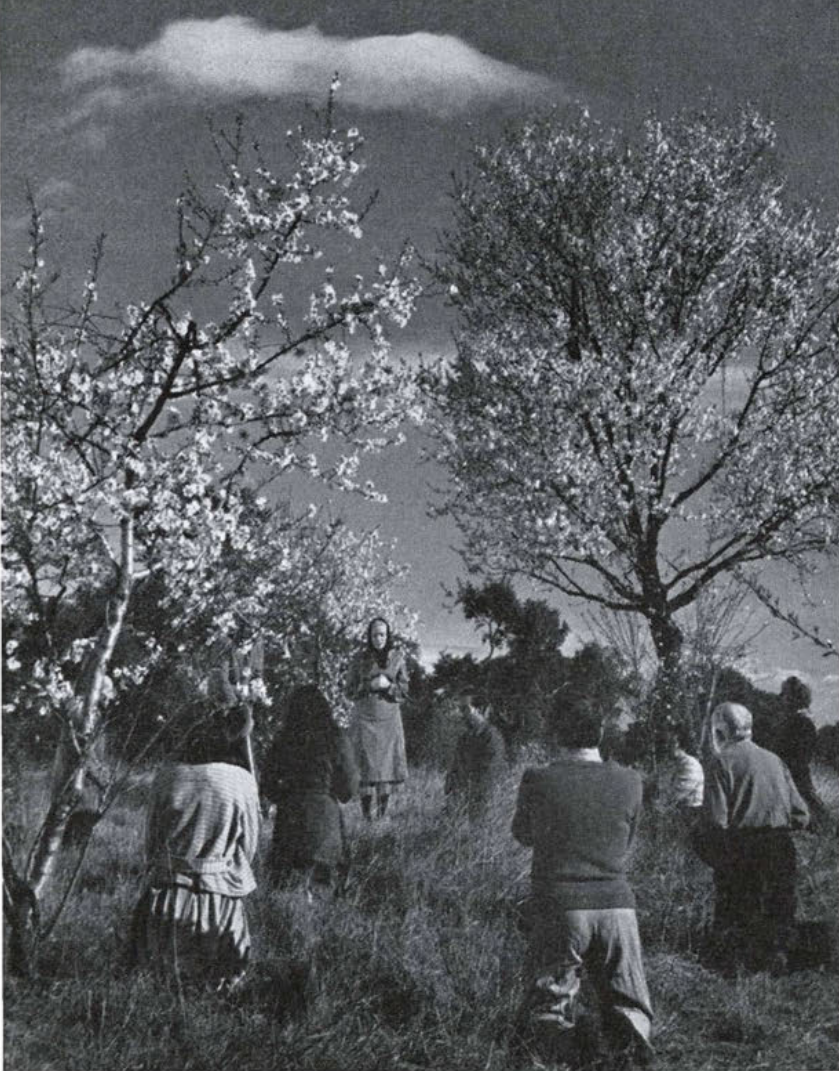


Production conference: Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Richard Harris.

DAVID ROBINSON

'thank
God—I am
still an
atheist'

AND
LUIS BUNUEL
VIRIDIANA



Viridiana is a direct continuation of my personal tradition from *L'Age d'Or*. With thirty years between them, they are the two films I have made with the most freedom.

THE WONDER IS NOT THAT Buñuel, who is one of the greatest artists the cinema has produced, should have spent fifteen years in the wilderness. Between *Las Hurdes* (1932) and *El Gran Calavera* (1947)—though properly speaking it was *Los Olvidados* in 1950 which marked his return—he was virtually inactive, confined to unproductive administrative jobs in the studios or driven to refuge in the Museum of Modern Art, from which he was hounded by the first anti-Communist witch-hunts. (Not that he was known as a Communist; but as director of *L'Age d'Or* he was fair game for the Red-hunters.) The wonder is rather that in the wilderness he was never tempted; never once, before or since, compromised; so that *Viridiana* still speaks as loud and as clear and with the same voice as *L'Age d'Or*, still asserting sanity and cleanliness in a world whose nature is to be mad and filthy. If there has been a change in the thirty years between, it is that the Swiftian fury of *L'Age d'Or* has given place to a calmer philosophic clowning, as cool and therefore as deadly as Voltaire.

It was not my intention to blaspheme, but of course Pope John XXIII knows more than I do about these things . . .

The story of how *Viridiana* came to be made is now well known. Gustavo Alatrste proposed that Buñuel should make a film exactly as he wished. Then it was decided that the film should be shot in Spain, in co-production with the two most advanced new companies there. UNINCI began production with *Welcome Mr. Marshall* and recently produced Torre-Nilsson's *The Hand in the Trap*; Films 59 enjoyed considerable international success with their first features, *Los Golfos* and *El Cochecito*. Buñuel can hardly have been reluctant to identify himself with this renaissance in the Spanish cinema; and the Spanish authorities were rashly delighted to welcome him home. They had, of course, underestimated their wandering son.

Somehow the script of *Viridiana* was put over on the censor, who requested only one slight change to the ending—a proposal which Buñuel gratefully accepted as a distinct improvement over the conclusion he had himself devised. The film was finished, and almost before anyone was the wiser, arrived in Cannes. The story goes that the censors never saw the film complete: it was barely ready in time for Cannes, so that with due apology it was submitted for appraisal in short sections, whose piecemeal effect must have seemed more or less innocuous.

At Cannes, of course, the film was a triumph, and the official Spanish representative proudly but incautiously stepped on to the platform to collect the Palme d'Or. The horse had bolted and the stable doors began to slam. The authorities were appalled; the Pope himself was said to have given voice to his disapproval. Officials were dismissed. A hue and cry was begun to find and destroy the negative. Trade agreements were invoked to prevent the film from being shown in France. The Spanish press was forbidden even to print its title. At 61, Buñuel was still as scandalous as he had been at 29, when *L'Age d'Or* provoked riots and bomb-throwing in Paris.

I don't see why people complain. My heroine is more of a virgin at the dénouement than she was at the start.

The form of the story is comparable to *Candide* or *A Cool Million*, in that it is the progress of an innocent and her discovery of life in all its carnal and surreal monstrosity. On the eve of taking her final vows, *Viridiana* is bidden to visit her sole relative, Don Jaime. Her reluctance, her fear of facing the outside world, proves to be a foreboding. She finds that her

Viridiana's beggars at their angelus.

uncle is a devout and gentle old patriarch who plays sacred music on the organ and does not acknowledge his only son because he was born outside the church's grace. The old man's strange pleasures include squeezing his plump body into the wedding garments of the wife who died on the night of their marriage, watching his housekeeper's little girl skipping, and caressing the phallic handles of the rope he has given her. Spying on Viridiana through a keyhole, the housekeeper, Ramona, discovers that the girl sleeps on the floor and that her luggage consists of a wooden cross, some nails and a crown of thorns.

Viridiana resembles Don Jaime's dead wife, and he asks her to put on the wedding dress. She does so; but when her uncle goes on to ask her to marry him, Viridiana angrily refuses. With Ramona's assistance, Don Jaime drugs the girl and carries her to bed. First laying her out like a corpse, he passionately kisses her, but stops short of worse assaults. Next morning, however, he tells Viridiana that she cannot return to her convent, for he has possessed her while she slept. She leaves the house notwithstanding; but Don Jaime has one last trick to outwit her. He hangs himself with the child's skipping-rope. His heirs are Viridiana and his natural son, Jorge.

The second part of the film opens with the Mother Superior's visit to the errant novice; and there is a characteristic Buñuel observation when the old lady puts on her spectacles, to transform her ascetic face into that of a fat old gossip, indecently curious to know Viridiana's motives for leaving the convent. Viridiana tells her that she intends to pursue Christianity independently and alone. This purpose she carries out by surrounding herself with a group of disciples—fearful old thieves and beggars and whores whom she feeds and clothes and teaches to pray. Her disciples quarrel viciously among themselves and cast out one of their number who is diseased. They are grandly, monstrously ungrateful: "The string beans were a little bitter today." But Viridiana blithely harvests virtue's own reward.

Meanwhile Jorge, Don Jaime's son, sets himself to build up the decayed estates; and a comic but clumsy sequence of cross-cutting contrasts vigorous, insolent images of manual work with the effete hypocrisy of Viridiana's beggars at their *angelus*. Jorge himself is normal and average and without complication. He dismisses the silly mistress he had brought to the mansion with him; and when the devout Viridiana promises to be a difficult lay, he turns quite easily to the lovelorn Ramona.

One day masters and servants must all go to town, and the beggars are left in charge. Their good intentions easily collapse and they mischievously break into the house to organise an orgiastic feast. They gorge, drink, swear, blaspheme and copulate. The blind leader of the beggars tells tales of robbery in churches, of betrayal and informing. At the height of their merrymaking they pose around the table in the exact attitudes of the Last Supper; the cock crows, and a whore pretends to photograph them, using as a camera the chief instrument of her trade. The orgy mounts, the beggars perform a mad *jota* to the "Hallelujah Chorus". Suddenly the merrymaking comes to an end as the blind man flies into a fearful rage on learning that his woman is with another beggar. He lays furiously about him with his stick; and over the destruction the gramophone sings triumphantly "And He shall reign for ever and ever." The beggars discreetly but tipsily take their leave as the proprietors return.

When Jorge and Viridiana enter the scene of chaos, he is overpowered by one beggar while another—his trousers supported by the self-same phallic skipping-rope—rapes Viridiana. Jorge bribes the second beggar to kill the rapist, just at the moment that the police, called by Ramona, arrive at the house.

The epilogue is not so tense or furious as the ending of *L'Age d'Or* or of *Nazarin*. Viridiana sits, evidently sadder and probably wiser, in her room. Outside in the garden her



Silvia Pinal and Fernando Rey, the novice and her uncle.

religio-masochistic paraphernalia—the cross, the nails, the crown of thorns—burns on a bonfire. Ramona's little daughter curiously fishes the crown out of the fire, and it lies there flaming on the ground: the image recalls the last image—the hair blowing on the cross—of *L'Age d'Or*. There, however, the feeling was of putrefaction, here of purification. Indoors, Jorge plays at cards with Ramona, who is evidently his mistress; and the gramophone is now playing a crazy pop song, "Shake, shakemedown, shake," which dominates the whole of this last section of the film. There is a knock at the door: it is Viridiana, who is at last pleading for human companionship. Ramona makes to leave, but Jorge stops her and has her sit down with Viridiana. "All cats," he says, "are grey in the dark." (This was the censor's invention: Buñuel's script had Jorge and Viridiana left alone.) And so Viridiana is dealt a hand of cards. The camera rapidly draws back from the little group at the table. "I knew," says Jorge, "that one day my cousin would play cards with me."

It's no good telling people that all's for the best in this best of all possible worlds . . . I believe that you must look for God in man. It's a very simple attitude.

Viridiana's picture of mankind does not present a very flattering image of God. Buñuel depicts men's viciousness in terms that are no less direct and no more amiable than those of *L'Age d'Or*. If there is a hero at all it is Jorge, who lives positively and (as a good surrealist) according to the dictates of desire. Yet one feels that Buñuel does not prefer him to the others—even to Don Ezekiel, the vicious little clown always good for a laugh and ready to cause trouble, or to the odious man with diseased hands (has he really venereal disease, or is it just the fallacy of the good that disease is the visitation of the wicked?) who repays Viridiana's kindness by abetting her rape.

The film's total effect is invigorating rather than depressing because Buñuel values them all alike as men, and likes them all because they are funny and human. If there is one whom he does not like, it is Don Amalio, the blind leader of the beggars. Buñuel has never liked blind men, linked as they are with false sentimental associations. In *L'Age d'Or* Modot kicked a blind man to the ground. Don Amalio can hardly be distinguished from the vile blind beggar in *Los Olvidados*.

Don Amalio is Christ at the Last Supper; Don Amalio has been an informer; among the beggars it is Don Amalio who looks for all the world like a true bourgeois when he puts on the clothing Viridiana gives him. On the other hand, if there is one character whom Buñuel really admires, it must be that insolently proud beggar who rejects Viridiana and spits on her piety; and in the same breath demands alms from her. This is a noble independence.

Other men might be affected to pity by this picture of rot and corruption. But for Buñuel pity implies resignation, and resignation defeat. In a way the irresistible moral degradation of the beggars recalls the hysterical litany of woes that beset the Hurdes. It was not the viper that bit them that was deadly, but their efforts to cure the wound. In the same way it is Viridiana's piety and goodness which corrupt. In *Las Hurdes* too there was no pity, only the clear gaze of a man who is prepared to recognise the world for what it is, and in doing so makes the first and vital step to therapy.

If Christ came back, they'd crucify Him all over again. You can be relatively Christian but to try to be absolutely Christian is an attempt doomed to failure from the start. I'm sure that if Christ came back the High Priests and the Church would condemn Him.

Buñuel admits no pity; and no panaceas. Nor does he accept the panaceas that are offered elsewhere. He is set, as he has always been set, against the soporifics of conventional morality and conventional sentimentality. "I am against conventional morals, traditional phantasms, sentimentalism and all that moral uncleanness that sentimentalism introduces into society . . . Bourgeois morality is for me immoral, and to be fought. The morality founded on our most unjust social institutions, like religion, patriotism, the family, culture: briefly, what are called the 'pillars of society'." The true answer is to live in the world and to seek God in man. The Christian virtues are unexceptionable in their argument, but in their application they are unreal, for the world is what it is.

In recent years Buñuel has become more and more interested in the figure and the failure of the perfect Christian. Dr. Lizardi in *La Mort en ce Jardin* is a prototype. *Nazarin* really was Christ in modern dress. His attempts to practise Christ's principles invariably led to disaster. His mere presence among

road-workers resulted in slaughter. Society being organised as it is, his martyrdom was inevitable. In the last shot, to the sound of the tambour of Calanda, he walks towards the camera like the other Christ at the end of *L'Age d'Or*, although this time he is victim instead of tormentor. In the final sublime moment when Nazarin receives human—not divine—charity, there seems to be an atonement of some kind. Like Lizardi and Nazarin, Viridiana's Christianity is destined to failure. Paradoxically it is her very piety which corrupts corruption. As in *Nazarin*, one feels at the end that there has been an atonement of man to man: Viridiana seems nearer salvation in human contact than in divine service.

But *Viridiana*, like all Buñuel's films, defies a simple interpretation. It is meant healthily to shock and disturb, and not to answer questions. Buñuel's statements are of their nature ambiguous and paradoxical. "If the meaning of a film is clear, then it can no longer interest me," he says.

The film seems an involuntary imitation of dreams. The cinema might have been invented to express the life of the subconscious, whose roots penetrate so deeply into poetry . . .

The critic of *The Times* wrote: ". . . the film itself is a masterpiece, perhaps one of the last, and undoubtedly one of the most unexpected, in the chequered history of surrealist art." Buñuel is still the surrealist of 1929:

*les objets bouleversants,
le cassage de gueules,
la peinture fantastique . . .
l'écriture automatique,
l'anticléricalisme primaire,
l'exhibitionisme,
les plaisanteries pas drôles.*

By his own account his conception of the film was a matter of association. The story was built up from unrelated images: "It was born out of one image . . . a young girl drugged by an old man . . . Then I thought that this girl should be pure and I made her a novice . . . The idea of the beggars came later."

The film's rich atmosphere is built out of images which are nothing if not surrealist: Viridiana's sleep-walking, ashes on the bed, dreams of black bulls and so on. Buñuel gives free play to his own private fetishisms. He admitted in an interview that the only image he recalled from *Les Anges du Péché* was the scene in which the nuns kiss the feet of one of their dead sisters. *Viridiana* is full of feet—Rita's skipping feet; Don Jaime's grotesque boots and the novice's square-toed shoes marching side by side; the striptease of Viridiana's lower limbs. For no reason at all Francisco Rabal (Jorge) is seen washing his feet. (One naively polite English critic guessed that this was because feet are the natural focus for a nun's downcast eyes.) Only briefly does Buñuel indulge his entomological preoccupations, when Don Jaime carefully rescues a nasty little fly which has fallen into a water butt. Phallic references proliferate, however: a richly comic and vulgar scene has Viridiana innocently, instinctively recoiling from contact with a cow's teat.

Technique has no problems for me. I've a horror of films de cadrages. I detest unusual angles. I sometimes work out a marvellously clever shot with my cameraman. Everything is all beautifully prepared, and we just burst out laughing and scrap the whole thing to shoot quite straightforwardly with no camera effects.

The real marvel of Buñuel is that he has the technical mastery to fulfil his ideas and his poetry. Technically *Viridiana* is unusually elaborate for its director. The camera moves a good deal; there's a tendency to show people in vistas seen through several rooms. The cameraman, José F. Aguayo, has

(Continued on page 155)



"Viridiana": the sleep-walking sequence.



Military execution in the snow: an early scene from Carl Foreman's war film "The Victors", shot on Swedish locations with Swedish army units standing in for the American troops.

IN THE PICTURE

Italian Notes

GIULIO CESARE CASTELLO writes: The boom in Italian cinema continues. The Nastro d'Argento (the Italian Oscar, assigned on the rating of the national film critics) went for 1961 to Antonioni (best director: for *La Notte*), to Alfredo Bini (best producer), and to Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'Italiana*, which gained the awards for theme, script and actor (Mastroianni). The fantastic success of Germi's satire has been the surprise of the season, and it heads the box-office lists along with the spectacles *Barabbas* and *El Cid*. Also among the season's releases has been a whole spate of films dealing with Mussolini and the years of Fascism, of which *All'armi, siamo Fascisti!* is by far the best. The work of three young socialist film-makers, the picture was held up for several months before the censor gave permission for distribution.

For some months, censorship has been a subject of discussion in parliamentary circles, at public meetings and in the press. Parliament has approved a law which brings theatre censorship to an end, while retaining it for the cinema. The censorship committees are no longer to include government officials, but will be made up of magistrates, legal, educational and psychological experts, with directors, film critics and the industry also to be represented. But directors and critics are not inclined to take part: they are not anxious to see a kind of "autocensorship" eventually becoming the substitute for administrative control.

This question of official censorship, and the right of magistrates to determine whether or not a film should receive a distribution licence, is not the only problem confronting the Italian cinema. The present boom has certainly caused over-production: 213 films were produced in 1961, a figure which is undeniably excessive when one realises that only a small proportion can hope to recover their costs in the home market. In 1960 45.6 per cent of the box-office takings came from Italian films (with the Americans accounting for 41.2 per cent); but this figure, although it may have been improved on during 1961, largely represents the earnings of a small number

of highly successful films, while the greater part of the Italian product is condemned to an indifferent reception. While the total volume of export business has risen considerably, there has been a drop in the number of films exported to the United States (from 82 in 1960 to 38 in 1961) and to Britain (from 35 to 15). Box-office takings in Italy have shown a steady increase; but this has more to do with the rise in seat prices than anything else, and there has been some falling off in the actual attendance figures during the past five years. Seat prices cannot be raised *ad infinitum*; and with production costs also mounting the situation is certainly problematical. On the other hand, the fact that Italian films have taken the lead over Hollywood in the national market is unprecedented: in 1950, for instance, two-thirds of the box-office takings went to American films, and only 24 per cent to the home product.

Many films which have won critical praise and major festival awards have done disappointingly poor business commercially. *Il Posto*, for instance, was not much of a success as far as the public was concerned; nor were De Seta's *Banditi a Orgoloso*, Castellani's *Il Brigante*, Petri's *I Giorni Contati*. "The spate of new productions issued by one of our foremost producers," a trade paper said last April, "will, in our opinion, be ruined by financial loss." But on looking at the list of productions now imminent, in the shooting stage or in the cutting room, the impression is still of enormous activity.

Visconti has begun shooting this summer on *The Leopard*, from the novel by Giuseppe di Lampedusa, with Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon and Claudia Cardinale; Fellini has a new project, as yet untitled but again to feature Marcello Mastroianni; De Sica is working on *I Sequestrati di Altona*, with Sophia Loren, Maximilian Schell, Anouk Aimée and Frederic March heading the cast; Rossellini has finished *Anima Nera* and is planning *Sagapò*, a story of the relations between Italian troops and Greek civilians during the war, a further venture in his collaboration with Anna Magnani. She also stars in the film now being directed by Pasolini, *Mamma Roma*, which is to be followed by another picture to be made by Pasolini in the Sudan. All these last three projects come from Alfredo Bini's production company. Other ventures include *I Misteri di Roma*, scripted by Zavattini, an episodic study of Rome which will have about a dozen young directors and be made in a very few days, although not, as has been rumoured, in twenty-four hours. De Seta and Olmi are also engaged on new films—De Seta this time on a study of life in Milan, while Olmi has turned his attention towards Sicily. Finally, De Laurentiis will be the Italian co-producer of Alain Robbe-Grillet's first film as a director. This is rather unexpected, since in a television interview not so long ago De Laurentiis declared his own dislike of *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* and made no bones about announcing that he "couldn't understand a word of it."



Marcello Mastroianni in Pietro Germi's satire "Divorzio all'Italiana".

Visitors to Sydney

CHARLES HIGHAM writes: The Sydney visit of the French-American director Robert Florey followed on a few days' shooting in Tahiti of an *Adventures in Paradise* TV episode. Florey is probably best remembered for his horror films, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Beast With Five Fingers* and *Frankenstein*, which he scripted, and of which he shot parts that were never used. (Carl Laemmle Junior substituted the British import James Whale as director of the final version.) *The Life and Death of 9413—A Hollywood Extra* (1927), which Florey shot with Gregg Toland and Slavko Vorkapich when all three were unknown, remains an interesting curiosity and a reliable film society standby. Florey also directed the first starring vehicles of the Marx Brothers (*The Cocoanuts*, 1929), Raimu and Fernandel (*Le Blanc et le Noir*, a much-banned miscegenation story, 1930), and Bette Davis (*Ex-Lady*, 1933).

After 40 years in Hollywood, Florey retains a childlike pleasure in film-making. He began as a director of Grand Guignol in Paris, was hired on his first day in Hollywood to revise the costumes used in John Gilbert's *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and as technical adviser on the same film when he pointed out during a take that Napoleon should neither be smoking a cigar nor reading *Le Figaro*. The director, former taxi-driver Emmett Flynn, engaged him to put the Fox company right on such Gallic details.

Florey conceived the celebrated *Frankenstein* as a Caligariesque affair, heavily subjective in mood, with an intensely Teutonic camera technique. With Bela Lugosi as a far more terrifying creation than Boris Karloff's rather pathetic monster, Florey in the sequences he shot added some new glosses to Mary Shelley's legend: the transplanting of a homicidal maniac's brain into the creature's cranium; the hunchbacked, runtish laboratory assistant; the mill-inspired by a pastry shop Florey knew—and its bizarre array of electrical equipment used to transmit the lightning's vital force to the monster's body. Florey regards Whale's version as a travesty of his original conception, at once less intense and less "placed" in the proper European Gothic tradition.

Equally compromised, he feels, was *The Beast With Five Fingers*, which emerged as more farcical than horrible after Warners had eliminated the subjective, expressionist flavour Florey wanted. William Fryer Harvey's story of a dead man's disembodied hand which haunts his neurasthenic nephew strongly appealed to Florey, who conceived the whole film in a series of distorted images seen through the diseased brain of the nephew, played by Peter Lorre. The pre-credits opening (unusual for the mid-1940s) had the hand, white and heavily beringed, scuttling towards the camera, surrounded by total darkness. Gradually, the startled audience was to

become aware that this was the vision of the tormented man. Other scenes conceived and shot by Florey frighteningly re-created the wanderings of the near-lunatic's imagination: all were cut by Jack Warner. Of the final film, little remains to suggest Florey's original conception: laden with a heavy roster of Warner stars, opulent and facetious, it isn't a film Florey cares to be associated with.

His *Murders in the Rue Morgue* was shot, incredibly, in three days; so was the little-known curio *Daughter of Shanghai*, with Anna May Wong and Charles Bickford (1937), of which the Paramount library in Sydney until lately held a print. Florey barely remembered it; but it remains perhaps his most completely created film. One remembered the opening sequence, in which a plane load of terrified Chinese immigrants are tossed from gaping cargo-bay doors over a flat, moonlit stretch of ocean; and the long episodes in an oriental night club set on a Pacific island. Powerfully Sternbergian in mood, these sequences are made still more reminiscent of the master of *chinoiserie* by the introduction of Evelyn Brent, leaning against a piano and puffing at a cheroot.

By coincidence, Frank Whitbeck, Carl Laemmle's publicity chief when *Frankenstein* was being made, came in on a Matson ship from Tahiti shortly afterwards. Beth Day's entertaining book *This Was Hollywood* gives the main details of Whitbeck's career as head of M-G-M's publicity department from his resignation from Universal in 1930 to his retirement in 1952. His worst moment was with Tod Browning's notorious *Freaks*, which Irving Thalberg was determined to make. For months, "human skeletons", pinheads, dwarfs and bearded ladies ran about the studios causing consternation among contracted actresses. Faced with the task of publicising the alarming production, Whitbeck was saved at the last minute from a harrowing assignment when exhibitors boycotted the film after a disastrous San Diego preview. But Thalberg always maintained Whitbeck should have sold them on releasing the picture.

Apart from "Gable's back and Garson's got him" for the ill-fated *Adventure* (1947), Whitbeck's best-known slogan was probably "Garbo Talks" for *Anna Christie*—a slogan which did as much as anything to establish the star in talkies. He didn't meet her until years later, when Louis B. Mayer finally introduced them. "Miss Garbo," Mayer said, "this is the man who invented the slogan 'Garbo Talks'." Garbo said to Whitbeck as she turned to leave the office: "Can you ever forgive yourself?" He never saw her again.

The Punch and Judy Man

PENELOPE HOUSTON writes: Tony Hancock's second film coincides with the announcement of a new TV series, a shift of allegiance from the BBC to the commercial network. Clearly, one thing Hancock does not want is to be tied down, particularly to any restrictive conception of his own comic character; and in his new film *East Cheam* and *Sidney James* and the battered fur-collared grandeur have been left well behind. *The Punch and Judy Man* allows him a wife (Sylvia Syms, proprietress of a seaside gift shop called Take-it-with-you), and puts him into conflict with her pursuit of respectability and with a town council who feel that their smart contemporary image is being endangered by the presence on the beach of Hancock's *Punch and Judy* show, John Le Mesurier's sculptures in sand, and Mario Fabrizi's street photographer's business. This contest provides the plot, constructed to give leeway for at least some elements of the Hancock monologue, or rather duologue with himself, on the lunacy of the world.

Tony Hancock has written his own script, in collaboration with Philip Oakes, who has a novel coming out in the autumn, reviews films, books and radio, and writes for television. Oakes is a welcome recruit to scriptwriting; a practised and prolific journalist whose edge remains unblunted. This script, he says, was written largely with a chosen cast in mind; and it promises a type of comedy more consistent and a good deal more firmly anchored in a recognisable world than *The Rebel*. The production company, Associated British, have allowed an unusually independent set-up, with control of casting, and of such major details as music, in the hands of Hancock and his associates. If anything goes wrong, they say, they will have no one to blame but themselves. The director is another newcomer, also from television: Jeremy Summers, son of the British director Walter Summers, whose own picture-making was mostly done in the rough and ruthless days when the director was prepared if necessary to double as stunt man. Watching them at work on a belligerent pub scene, on a day when Tony Hancock had himself been under fire when a pane of glass shattered suddenly in his face, one got an impression that things were moving briskly. In fact, Philip Oakes says, the TV backgrounds of star, director and co-writer have probably trained them all to work at speed. A few weeks location

shooting at Bognor later in the summer round off the schedule. Meanwhile Tony Hancock, under the guidance of a veteran Punch and Judy operator, has been learning some of the tricks of the trade. His main concern: the risk of swallowing the gadget which produces the voice of Mr. Punch.

"Papa" and his Children

ROBERT VAS writes: This year's rather tame festival at Oberhausen was enlivened by a news conference at which a group of young German documentary directors issued a manifesto. Their ambition: to shake a jaded cinema out of the worst mess in its history. The present state of the German industry gives real cause for concern: its better known directors seem to make one flop after another, artistic standards are depressingly low, state help inadequate, and the closing of the legendary UFA studios painfully drives home the contrast between past and present. "The German Film Couldn't Be Bettered" is the cynical title of a somewhat shallow and sensational new book, which asks the question "What is wrong with our cinema?" and answers: "It is bad. It is going through a bad time. It makes us feel bad. It is handled badly. And it is satisfied to remain bad." It is precisely this weary indolence of the so-called "Papa's cinema" against which the young directors—known as the Munich Group—have raised their voices. They rest their claims on "the number of prizes won at international festivals and the appreciation of the critics. These films, and their success, show that the future of the German cinema is in the hands of those who have proved that they are speaking the new language of the cinema."

One of the shorts, *Notizen aus dem Altmühltal*, made by two young TV writers, Heinz Tichawsky and Hans-Rolf Strobel, has created a nation-wide sensation. It is a tough, cynical survey of a small South German district, with its pseudo-patriotism, kitsch-culture and "heroic tradition". Not always a sympathetic film, it has certainly been made with its eyes open. Other shorts deal with wartime anti-Semitism, Hitlerism, teenage problems, Americanisation. They ask questions; and if they are a bit dispassionate in the way they leave the answers open, the film-makers are unmistakably demonstrating their concern.

The manifesto, with its demand for "freedom from conventions, freedom from commercial pressures," was signed by 26 young directors. They are asking for five million D-marks, with the aim of producing ten features after the *nouvelle vague* pattern. "We have concrete conceptual, formal and economic ideas about the new German film. Together, we are prepared to take financial risks." Although a certain scepticism on the part of the industry was to be expected, some of the older producers from "Papa's cinema" have already had a meeting with "Papa's children" and a first grant of a million marks has been forthcoming. This looks like another young cinema to be watched.

Work in Progress

Great Britain

JOSEPH LOSEY: *The Furnished Room*: after *The L-Shaped Room* another novel (this one by Laura Del Rivo) about another girl in London. Location: Notting Hill; leading part to be played by Claudia Cardinale. Dial, for ABPC.

ALEXANDER MACKENDRICK: his first feature since 1957 is *Sammy Going South*, from W. H. Canaway's novel about a small boy's journey across Africa. Michael Balcon produces, for Bryanston/Seven Arts.

RONALD NEAME: *The Lonely Stage*, with Judy Garland as an American singer returning to top the bill at the Palladium, Dirk Bogarde as the ex-lover she meets again in London. Straight drama, though Judy will sing four or five Harold Arlen numbers. For United Artists release.

ROBERT STEVENS: *In the Cool of the Day*, the latest John Houseman production and another Anglo-American love affair, involving Peter Finch and Jane Fonda. For M-G-M.

United States

BLAKE EDWARDS: *Days of Wine and Roses*, about the effects of alcoholism on the lives of a young couple. With Jack Lemmon and Lee Remick, for Warners.

JOHN FRANKENHEIMER: an adaptation of Richard Condon's savage and satirical political novel, *The Manchurian Candidate*, with Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, Janet Leigh. For United Artists.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK: *The Birds*, adaptation of a short horror story by Daphne du Maurier, with Rod Taylor, Suzanne Pleshette, Jessica Tandy, and cast of menacing birds. Shanley Productions.

Judy Garland in a scene from John Cassavetes' "A Child is Waiting", a story about the care of spastic children.



"The Punch and Judy Man": Tony Hancock and Sylvia Syms.

DON WEIS: adaptation of the stage comedy *Critic's Choice*, reviving the Bob Hope-Lucille Ball partnership of *The Facts of Life*. For Warners.

France

CLAUDE CHABROL: collaborates on his new film with Françoise Sagan, whose screenplay is titled, simply, *Landru*. No casting announced as yet.

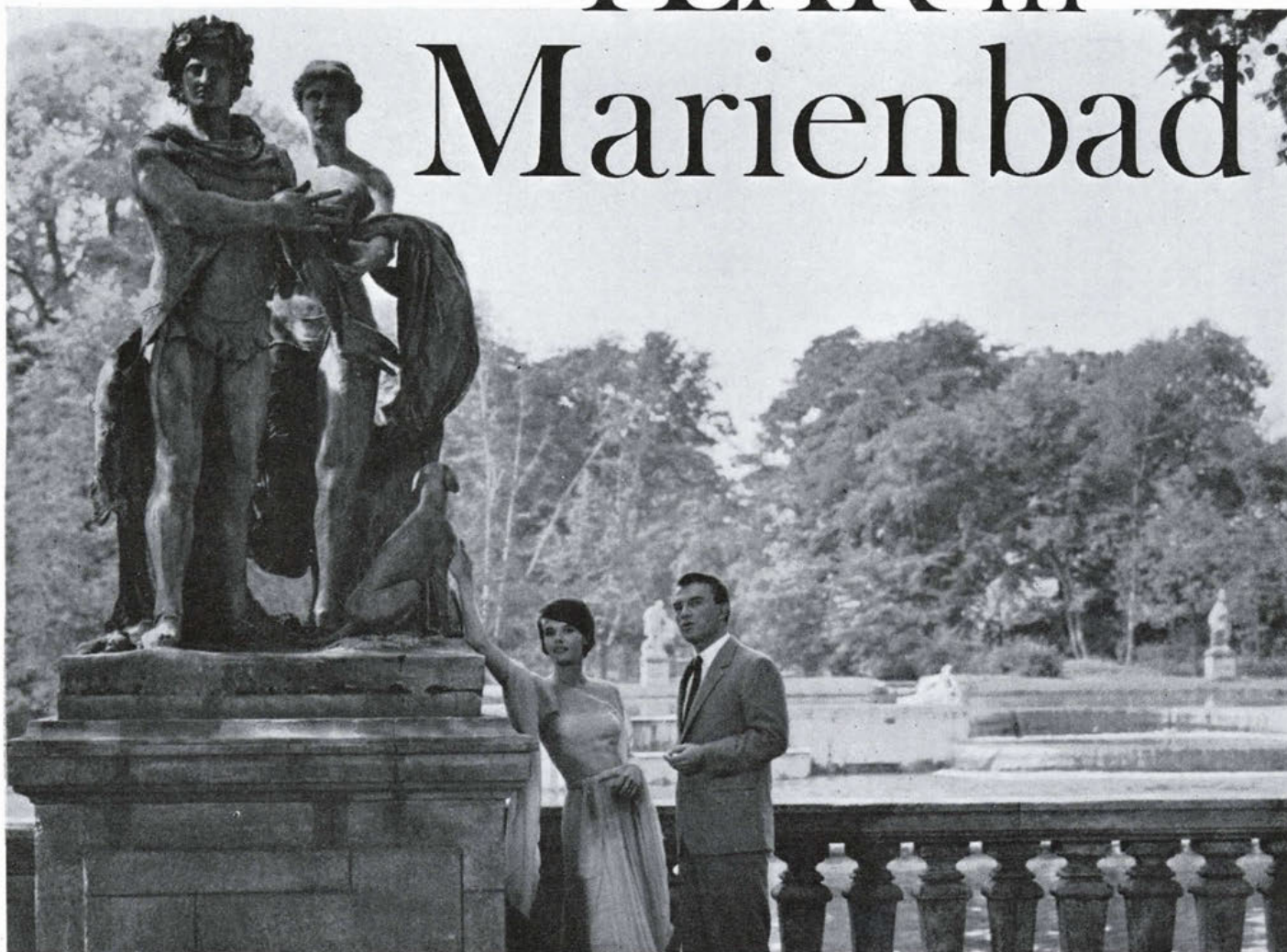
GEORGES FRANJU: *Thérèse Desqueyroux*. Emmanuelle Riva plays the name part in this adaptation of the François Mauriac novel, with Philippe Noiret.

JEAN-PIERRE MELVILLE: a story about the hazards of life as a suspected police informer (slang title: *Les Doulos*), with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Serge Reggiani. To be followed by a Simenon adaptation, *L'Ainé des Ferchaux*, also with Belmondo.



JACQUES BRUNIUS

EVERY YEAR in Marienbad



or The Discipline of Uncertainty

L'ANNEE DERNIERE A MARIENBAD has by now produced an amount of critical literature which, collected in volume, would easily outweigh the original script and dialogue. Yet there is no other film about which so little has been said in so many words.

I don't think a single critic has missed recording the now famous difference of interpretation between the two authors, and many of them have used this "difference" to attack the film. Those who gloat over it fail at the same time to emphasise that Resnais and Robbe-Grillet have proclaimed their complete agreement about the construction and the style of the film. Moreover, the "gloaters" grossly exaggerate this "difference of interpretation". As so much was made of this

trifle, let us reduce it once and for all to its proper dimensions.

Resnais said he was inclined to believe that something really did happen last year in Marienbad (but he never said what!), Robbe-Grillet wrote in his Preface that the Narrator "gives the impression of making it up." (Incidentally, this is slanted in the published English translation, where "on a l'impression" is rendered by "we sense".) As they have carefully constructed a film based on doubt—where the nearest thing to a story is precisely the story of a doubt, where even the character who attempts to persuade the other is not quite sure of every detail—it would be a failure indeed if they had not managed to maintain at least that amount of uncertainty. I am by no means certain that Resnais and Robbe-Grillet are

absolutely sincere about this so-called difference of interpretation. Even if their guesses, relative to what happened or not, were identical, pretending to differ would still be the best hint they could give of a right approach to their film; and would be sufficiently justified by this consideration.

The critics should rather thank them for their courteous refusal to explain any more. Any additional information or explanation would sound like a slap in the face of the critics and an exposure of their emotional and intellectual inadequacy. As it is, Resnais and Robbe-Grillet have already said too much.

Another important point to note is that most "anti-Marienbad" reviewers misleadingly state that the film presents three characters, X, A and M—thus betraying that they are not really talking about the film, where these initials are never spoken, but about the published script, where they are used for the purpose of convenience. Such a lapse explains why so many have failed to let the sensuous impact of the film, both visual and aural, affect their sensibilities. Theirs are literary reactions to a printed film script.

There is not much point in trying to convert those who refuse to be moved or interested. Some of my best friends, and some of the people I most respect, simply state that the film bores them. They are not likely to make the effort to see it again and offer themselves to its strange fascination. The obvious conclusion, if you are bored, is that the film must be "pretentious nonsense".

In another category are those who, in spite of both authors' protests, try to understand what *Marienbad* symbolises. Their discoveries are stupendous, especially if one takes into account that their excavations are attempted without first examining the object submitted to their investigations. I mean that they start unveiling symbols before they have described and clarified the film's *structure*. This might be fruitful if it were a conventional film with a conventional story line. It happens to be a very unconventional film where the content can only be discovered by consideration of the structure. I wouldn't go so far as to say that the form and content are totally identical—this would fail to take into account the margin of uncertainty left deliberately in this structure, where interpretations factual, psychological or symbolical, are permitted. However, it can safely be said that *Marienbad* is probably the first film where, to a very great extent, the content *is* the form, and would not exist outside this particular form. Any attempt to construct valid interpretations must be postponed until the structure has been studied, described and understood. Only thus can we map the few certainties contained in the film and delineate the shadowy zones left to our imaginations.

I confess that when I saw the film for the first time I was completely defeated by a few apparent inconsequences. I was of course quite prepared (by my own writings on the subject, and my own experience as a film-maker and viewer) to accept a "mental continuity", a continuity of thought, instead of the usual factual-spatial continuity—after all we are familiar with the flashback—but I could not see clearly the line of thought justifying the breaks in continuity. I suspected that a certain number of them might be arbitrary. Yet I could not resist the hypnotic fascination, the visual beauty and dignity of the film, the purity of writing. It induced me to caution.

A second viewing forced me to take sides, convinced me that here was *the* film I had been waiting for during the last thirty years. A brief glance at my own writings on the cinema reminded me that I had advocated the making of films following a mental process, and shown that it was not only possible but desirable. A number of films indicated the way: *Caligari*, *Sherlock Junior*, *Peter Ibbetson*, *Berkeley Square*, *Un Chien Andalou*, *L'Age d'Or*, *Citizen Kane*, *La Règle du Jeu** and a few others perhaps. But here was a film which carried their lesson to its logical conclusion.

After a third and fourth viewing I discovered that I was more and more interested each time, my pleasure and fascination increasing with familiarity. I am now quite prepared to

claim that *Marienbad* is the greatest film ever made, and to pity those who cannot see this.

Those who start from the premise that the authors have deliberately, maliciously, arbitrarily, upset the chronology of events, and even those who obligingly try to put it right in their minds, are blinding themselves to the relative simplicity of the film. It is this simplicity that must be perceived before going any further. There never was any chronological order to upset, as there never was any certainty about any single episode described by the Narrator†. The only order is the order in which these events, real or imaginary, remembered or invented, come to his mind. The film is constructed in order to build up the gradual increase of his conviction, which is reflected by a weakening of the girl's resistance to persuasion. From time to time a doubt brings a temporary regression in this process of persuasion, but both the build-up and the setbacks result in an increase of tension between them. I feel in *Marienbad* a far more riveting suspense than in any Hitchcock thriller.

* * *

Let us try to define more precisely what is the architecture of this "story of a persuasion".

First a point on which I think everybody can agree: this film is presented as a process of recollection. Secondly, it has the atmosphere and the form of a dream. The opening droning recitative is obviously intended to put us in the mood and to warn us of what to expect.

Whether it is the dream itself—or a recollection of a dream—or the recollection of actual events presenting themselves in the memory as if they might have been a dream—or even mixed recollections of dreams and actual events—this is at the moment idle speculation: and anyway it is irrelevant, because the narrator is giving us his recollections *as they come*, and does not appear to be himself in a position to discriminate between these emotional fragments. He does not know himself which are dreams and which are shreds of lived reality. This uncertainty is essentially the subject of the film.

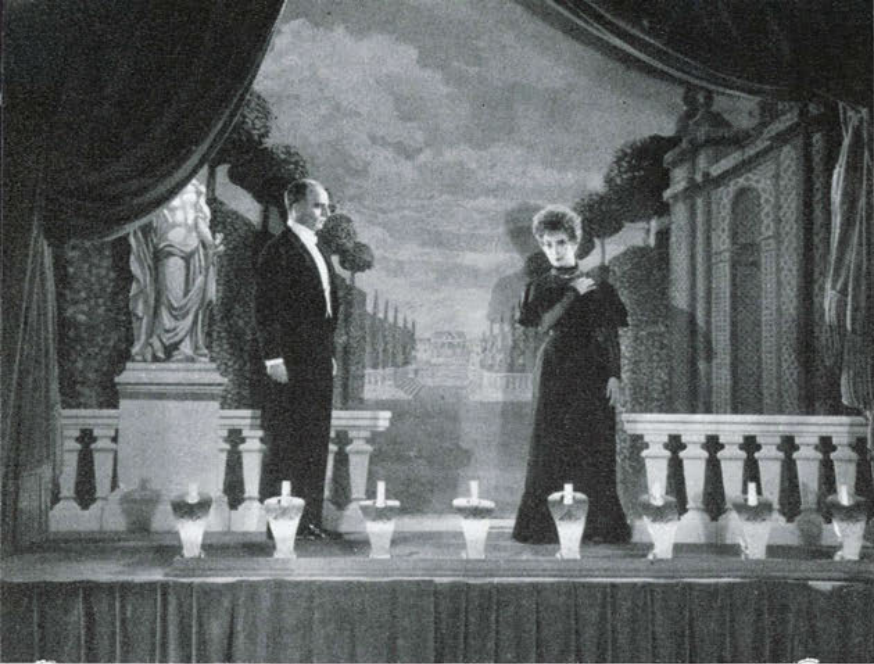
At this point we cannot ignore the possibility that this dream is not *his*, but *hers*. While the bulk of the film follows the Narrator's recollections, some sequences follow *her* mental processes and show events as *she* imagines them, even confronting their different memories of the same object (is there a painting or a mirror above the mantelpiece?). Sometimes the Narrator's voice seems to be trying to guide or influence her recollections or imaginings, as we see them on the screen. (Her delay in reproducing the posture he describes—her groping along large mirrors—his insistence that she goes to the bed—the door open or shut, etc. . . .)

This again does not really affect the general structure. If it is *his* dream it can include his guesses about what she dreamt or imagined. If it is *her* dream, it is a dream in which his voice is the main leading thread and she inserts her own dreams or memories or imaginings within *his* recollections. What is important is that most of the time their dreams or recollections do not coincide, with a few exceptions, when the persuasive voice seems to shatter her insistence upon not remembering, and she sometimes admits glimpses of recollection.

However, the main body of recollections or imaginings takes place in the mind of the narrator. As both hypotheses give

*Richard Massingham's *And so to Work*, less known, must be mentioned separately. Massingham's own notion of film-continuity was almost exactly that of Resnais, who probably knew his films through the Cinémathèque Française.

†Although this film could rightly be called "anti-narrative", does not give us a story in the conventional sense, that is rationalise *a posteriori*, I shall persist in calling the man "The Narrator", because to narrate is exactly what he is trying to do, even if to a large extent the film is devoted to his failure to do so. Alain Resnais pointed out that Albertazzi's Italian accent in French is meant to show that his narration is *not* an interior monologue.



"Je suis à vous . . .". The play scene, which is also the final scene of the film.

finally the same result I shall from now on accept the first as simpler and more convenient for the sake of analysis.

The next point—and it flows from what precedes—is that whoever is dreaming or recollecting, there are several dreams or recollections within the main narrative. This fact amply justifies the sudden changes of costume and breaks in continuity. It only requires a small amount of attention to see that such apparent ruptures of continuity are simply passages to another time, another idea, another recollection, or sometimes, to the same thing as imagined by the other character. The changes of costume, far from being arbitrary, are clearly intended to be of some help to the spectator. How ungrateful of some critics to denounce them as puzzling and gratuitous!

It will be noticed here that I have not yet mentioned the possibility that the film might be describing present events in the large hotel, during which the Narrator, meeting the girl, tries to persuade her that they met last year. I have not done so because, although I originally believed it, I dismissed this belief after seeing the film a second time and after verifying my impression by reference to the script. My reasons for pushing aside this hypothesis are as follows:

(a) The Narrator starts, it is true, in the present tense, but soon abandons it before any action takes place and speaks in the past tense until the end, except, of course, in the scenes with other characters.

(b) The whole of the end scene, showing the girl finally persuaded to follow him, is equally narrated in the past tense.

I do not see how any part of the film could be taken as describing the present when these two sequences, which constitute a frame for the whole film, are both situated in the past. They establish clearly that the entire film is a recollection of past events, dreams or imaginings.

The illusion that some scenes are set in the present comes from what Robbe-Grillet's preface defines in these words: "The essential characteristic of the cinema-image is its present-ness." The same could be said of the dream-image.

Robbe-Grillet also remarks in this preface: "There is no last year, and Marienbad is no longer to be found on any map. This past too has no reality beyond the moment it is evoked with sufficient force; and when it finally triumphs it has merely become the present, as if it had never ceased to be so." The contradiction with what I have just said is only apparent. In the realm of dreams and imaginings we necessarily observe time from above. One might as well consider some of the episodes of *Marienbad* as happening in the future. Perhaps some of the action takes place next year? We are outside the flow of time and the usual notion of time has become meaningless.

This will help me to go a step further. I had up to now considered simultaneously several possibilities:

1. Recollections of actual facts.
2. Recollections of dreams or day-dreams.
3. Invention on the spur of the moment.
4. A blend of the three.
5. A possible difference of nature between: (a) scenes illustrating these recollections or inventions, representing the past; and (b) scenes of persuasion representing the present.

We can now dismiss the last distinction. If he was just inventing it *now*, he would not *conclude in the past*. How could she have already eloped with him before having been persuaded?

There is not much point either in maintaining any longer the distinction between recollected dreams or reality. Whatever it is that the Narrator recollects—real facts, imaginings or dreams—the mental process is the same. The film is conceived as a clinical report of such a mental process, and carefully avoids establishing whether any of the events recollected are real or imagined, past, present or future. This is perfectly legitimate. When we try to remember certain events, especially of an emotional nature, we sometimes find it difficult to be sure that they really happened, that we did not dream them. Perhaps we *only* dreamt them. Perhaps we *also* dreamt them. The reverse is true in any attempt to remember a dream: we sometimes introduce some memory of a real event into our memory of a dream.

* * *

We can therefore consider *Marienbad* one way or the other. I shall from now on talk about it as if it were a dream. There are enough mentions of dreams in Robbe-Grillet's preface and in Resnais' various statements to justify such a choice. Furthermore it is easy to recognise in *Marienbad* all the familiar mechanisms of the dream: disguise, displacement, condensation, dramatisation. What follows will add further justification.

There is a category of dreams which are more likely to induce in our minds the kind of confusion with real events I was referring to previously. Such are *recurring* dreams. After we have dreamt the same event several times, it is only natural that we should begin to believe the last dream was inspired by some real happening and not only by some previous dream or series of dreams. This is further complicated by the well-known phenomenon of false recognition, by which, whether in dream or in our daily life, we have the fallacious impression of having been here before, or of having seen before what is happening now.

In one of the best articles published about *Marienbad* (in *Positif* No. 44, March 1962) Robert Benayoun, suggesting the explanation of a meeting in a dream, attributes to this phenomenon the Narrator's illusion of having met the girl before. This hypothesis fits quite well with the assumption that the "present" scenes in the film are really supposed to show what is happening *now*, but I have more or less rejected this idea, and furthermore I do not see how the phenomenon of instant fallacious recollection can help in analysing the structure of the film. On the other hand the *recurring dream* pattern seems to fit better. Before accepting this, however, let us see what reasons I have for suggesting it.

The idea occurred to me the second time I saw the film. While the credit titles are unfolding, we hear the Narrator's voice, sometimes near, sometimes fading away, repeating the same ideas and the same words like a repeating groove, or a loop, but not quite the same, since each time they reappear in a slightly different grouping: "Once again—I walk on, once again, down these corridors . . . I was already waiting for you . . ."

Not only are these words "once again" stressed here by repetition, but they crop up later in the film. In conjunction with the repeating groove cum variations, this suggested to me not only the dream, but the recurring dream. The hint was so convincing that I could not help seeing the rest of the film as

if it were a recurring dream. Instead of being puzzled, as I had been the first time, by a suspicion of the arbitrary, everything now looked clear, simple and not only legitimate but strictly necessary. When I heard "*And once again I was walking on down these same corridors, walking for days, for months, for years, to meet you . . .*" (italics are mine) I was definitely convinced. The various people to whom I suggested this explanation do not seem to have experienced any difficulty in following the continuity of *Marienbad* when they saw it for the first time; and this shows that there is at least *one* approach to the film which eliminates the apparent inconsistencies in continuity.

The fact that, in the Narrator's recollection, several successive dreams are sometimes combined to reconstruct a single sequence of events, is of course sufficient to explain some sudden changes of light and unexpected changes of costume. They always signal the passage from one dream to another. But this is not the strongest argument in favour of my hypothesis, as anyway these changes would be acceptable in an ordinary dream, although they could, with some reason, be considered as relatively gratuitous.

The fact that the characters of the film appear first in the early scenes in frozen attitudes, as photographs in a family holiday album, suggests that these scenes—which might be taken for the present reality, framing as it were the dream recollection—are in fact already dream scenes remembered. The identity of situation in the play being performed and between the characters of the film—to such an extent that in the dialogue on the stage, the Narrator and the male partner of the play can relay each other—is another pointer hinting that we are already in a dream. What the actors on the stage are playing is the final scene of the film. Most of the snatches of conversation overheard in the various lounges of the hotel are in some way pre-echoes of episodes which we shall see later (the couples discussing problems similar to the Narrator's and the girl's situation—the broken heel—the mysterious Frank who was "a friend of her father's and had come to keep an eye on her," etc. . . .).

This does not supply any conclusive interpretation. They can be taken as the rough material from which the Narrator constructs his dream or day-dream or invention. On the other hand he may have picked them out simply because they have a more or less direct bearing on his own situation. They could also be a disguise for his obsessive preoccupations, as it often happens in dreams (and especially in recurring dreams) where the same material can give birth to different dramatisations. In any case, if they do not specifically confirm the recurring dream hypothesis, they fit easily in its pattern.

There are, however, several oddities in the film which nobody has tried to explain, and which I believe cannot be satisfactorily explained by any other hypothesis.

First there is the fact that some recollections of the same event are presented in several different ways, none being more



The final sequence: ". . . out of some superstition, you had asked me to leave you there until midnight . . ."

certain than the others. The most blatant case is that of the several different endings, including the murder of the woman by the man who may be her husband. The Narrator rejects the endings he does not like, especially the murder one which is incompatible with taking her away ("No, this is not the right ending . . . I must have you alive . . ."), and only accepts the final one, which represents his burning wish. He does not even want to have raped her. He wants her to follow him. But the only possible origin of the various twists in his story is in a series of dreams (or day-dreams) which did not always turn the same way. It has become difficult for him, now, to remember which was, or should have been, the right one. It may be objected that these various endings might all have been part of a single dream, and that they may be dreams within a dream. (Some of them may even be *her* contribution to the dream.) This is possible, but less likely, and does not tally so satisfactorily with the words "once again". Let us not forget that the Narrator seems to think that his waiting quest has already lasted "for years".

We shall find further proof and confirmation in an analysis of the most disturbing discrepancies in chronology. There are at least two very puzzling cases—that is, puzzling unless my hypothesis is accepted.

For clarity I shall henceforth number the years. The time of persuasion, which we are tempted to call the present, will be Year Zero; and last year will be Year Minus One.

Let us remember the scene where the Narrator says: "What proof do you still need? I had also kept a photograph of you taken in the park . . . but when I gave it to you, you answered again, that it proved nothing . . ." So he has not given the photograph to her just now. When then? Let us assume it was a few days before the Year Zero scene shown at the moment. It must therefore have been taken last year in Marienbad or elsewhere. He then goes on evoking their meetings the year before (Year Minus One), in the park, in her bedroom, and, on a certain evening, a visit of the supposed husband to her bedroom, during which the photograph in question is *already in her possession* (which gives rise to questions from the so-called husband: "Who took it? When was it taken?").

From the wording of the Narration, one seems to be justified in assuming that this whole sequence is an evocation of the preceding year (Minus One), which would mean that the photograph was not taken last year (Minus One) but two years ago (Year Minus Two) or even before (Year Minus Three), and given to her last Year (Minus One), in a previous attempt at persuasion. However in the hypothesis of a



". . . There was a big mirror just inside the door, an enormous mirror . . ."

recurring dream, an apparent discrepancy becomes perfectly natural.

There was another similar instance (although less noticeable because no prop was involved) in a previous scene. The Narrator and the woman are sitting in a hotel lounge. The other guests have left them. She sits on a small sofa on the right of the frame. He sits on a chair at a table on the left. This scene obviously takes place in what one is tempted to call the "present", that is Year Zero. He says, talking to her about the preceding year:

"You never seemed to be waiting for me—but we kept meeting at every turn of the paths, behind every bush, at the foot of each statue, near every pond . . . we were talking about anything at all . . . or else we weren't talking at all . . ."

From these words we are led to expect an evocation of these meetings, and true, it comes in a series of shots of them in the park. In the last shot of this sequence (which we assume represents another meeting of Year Minus One) he says: "But you always stayed at a certain distance . . ." In the past tense!

So it appears that last year, Year Minus One, he was already trying to remind her of previous meetings having taken place the year before: Year Minus Two—or Year Minus Three . . . who knows?

If you insist on regarding *Marienbad* as a series of arbitrary inconsistencies, you will no doubt conclude that this is just another gratuitous whim of the editor or the director (or indeed the scriptwriter, as this follows the published script). I happen to believe that such a carefully polished work is not likely to be unnecessarily arbitrary. The possibility must be considered, of course, that this is part of a deliberate ambiguity: that the authors have just reverted without warning to Year Zero at the end of a sequence which appeared to take place in Year Minus One, and that they do so again in the sequence about the photograph. I am more inclined to believe that within this ambiguity, there is a rule, a "rule of ambiguity" as it were, and that this rule is so chosen that it allows a certain kind of logic to be respected without dispelling the ambiguity necessary to the style and mood of the film.

A last example for good measure: the recollection of the meeting at the foot of the ambiguous statue occurs twice. The first time the Narrator recalls it: "Remember: quite near us there was a group of stone . . ." and he continues: "The others around us had come closer. Someone gave the statue's name . . ." So they were not alone. But *we do not see* the scene. The second time we *see* the meeting, including their discussion about the meaning of the statue, but this time the Narrator and the woman are alone.

It is clear that this scene would not have happened twice, but could have been dreamt or imagined twice, in different circumstances. Such a difference cannot possibly be a failure of memory. If you remember such a striking episode in your relationship with a girl, in such detail as to be able to recall the conversation, you also remember if there were other people around. It is again typical of a recurrent dream.

I had reached this point in my reflections, and was already convinced that such an hypothesis was the only one to account totally for the film's structure and for the various statements made by the authors, when I read by chance (I had given up reading about this film) the interview given by Resnais and Robbe-Grillet to Claude Ollier. There suddenly appeared confirmation by Robbe-Grillet himself of the preceding deductions.

"It is possible that past episodes, like present ones, may be partially or even completely imagined, or dreamed, or reconstructed askew. There may have been several stories in the past which the hero confuses and tangles up. There may never have been anything but a desire which takes shape little by little under the influence of words, by persuasion and suggestion. But this does not exclude the possibility, after all, that there was indeed a meeting, last year at *Marienbad*." (So much for the famous difference with Resnais!)

The words *recurring dream* are not pronounced, but the hint

is clear. It will be noticed that in my series of observations I have never definitely stated that *Marienbad* is a recurring dream. My purpose was to show that the recurring dream pattern is the most convenient image to describe the structure of the film and to facilitate its understanding. All apparent discrepancies become natural in such a pattern, where the dreamer (or day-dreamer) is more or less aware of his previous dreams, in which he already remembered some anterior dreams, and so on, as in a mental corridor of mirrors.

In the article quoted above, Robert Benayoun came very close to a description of this structure when he compared *Marienbad* to Raymond Roussel's *Nouvelles Impressions d'Afrique*, which is written in a series of parenthesis within parenthesis within parenthesis, and so on, like Chinese boxes. This is a different image to denote the same structure. Resnais' allusion to "degrees of reality" is another.

Of course this interpretation leaves a number of ambiguities and uncertainties. They are precisely characteristic of such a tale. They are the stuff dreams are made of. They also appear in recollections of deep emotional crises, where the boundaries between facts and fancies, actions and desires, become blurred. They are necessary, indispensable in this film.

Resnais has asked several times for the spectator "not to reconstruct a story coldly from the outside, but to live it at the same time as the characters, and from the inside." Indeed the authors of this film never adopt the god-like omniscient attitude, usual among authors who know everything about their characters. They have put themselves in exactly the same position as their main character. As for us spectators, we can identify ourselves completely with the Narrator, because we know what he knows, what he remembers, never more or less. We can also identify ourselves with the girl, because it might after all be her dream and because the Narrator sometimes identifies himself with her. So do we in dreams where we can be ourselves or someone else, where we can be ourselves and at the same time *see* ourselves from outside.

Seen from this point of view *Marienbad* is no longer obscure or mysterious. At least there is no longer any mystery at the level of the film's shape. There is no more need to look for deep symbolism in order to enjoy the film with a small high-brow minority. It can be enjoyed, and immensely enjoyed, for what it is, once you see clearly what it is.

* * *

The mystery and the symbols, if you insist, must now be excavated from a deeper stratum. Before indulging in such exercises, however, I contend that a closer examination of the characters of the film is indispensable. It has been said that they behave like puppets, or androids, or robots. I am not so sure of that. They are certainly withdrawn, secretive, but inhuman—no. They only appear so because we do not know all their motives. In everyday life we are often in the same position of being puzzled by our best friends' behaviour when we are not in their total confidence.

As I have taken great pains to show that the so-called differences of interpretation between Resnais and Robbe-Grillet were nothing of the sort, I hope I will not be accused of perversity if I bring to light a really important difference, a major departure in Resnais' film from Robbe-Grillet's script. (There are not many really significant ones.)

I was saying earlier that I find it easy to identify myself with the Narrator. With the elusive character played by Sacha Pitoëff I feel no immediate identification at all. With the girl, I suppose a female spectator can find identification possible. I find it difficult as a man, of course, but mainly because if I were she, I should know who is this enigmatic character referred to as "Your husband, perhaps." To which she never answers.

Now, is he her husband? I do not think the hero believes he is, or he would not put it that way. Living in the same hotel, and claiming as he does to have met them last year, and being so obsessively in love with her, he must have enquired

discreetly, of the other guests, of the porter, the receptionist, the chambermaids, even bribed them to discover more. (You will notice that I am now talking as of a real story, but once having admitted the particular shape of the story as happening in the mind, I see no reason now not to treat it as any other story, which also happened in the mind of its author.)

The Narrator has not discovered the real status of the girl's companion or their exact relationship. Why is it so secret? Why is she so non-committal? Would the explanation be that this relationship is uncommon, unconventional, perhaps reprehensible or likely to call for reprobation? Personally I never thought he behaved like a husband, but he does not even behave like a lover or a suitor, at least not like an ordinary lover or suitor. What is he then? Would he be like the Frank who appears only in people's conversations: "Frank had convinced her he was a friend of her father's and had come to keep an eye on her. It was a funny kind of eye, of course . . ."

To me he behaved much more like a brother. I was so puzzled that I thought of looking up the script to find his description, at his first appearance. And it reads: "A man of about fifty (tall, grey-haired) with a good deal of style . . ." Everyone will agree that Sacha Pitoëff, who has a good deal of style, is not grey-haired and does not look fifty—not even a well-preserved fifty.

So Robbe-Grillet originally intended this character to look like an ageing husband, lover, or suitor, or guardian, *old enough to be her father*. He took further care to preserve a very odd suspicion about their relationship, a suspicion which was even bound to imply that *he might be her own father*. Written as it was, the suggestion of possible incest was unmistakable. I am surprised that no reader or critic has yet noticed it.

In the film this suggestion is modified by the choice of a younger actor to play the part. Is this pre-censorship of a scabrous situation by the producers? Or forced upon them by submission of the script to the censorship committee? Whatever it is, it has obviously been accepted by Resnais and Robbe-Grillet—let us see what they made of it.

I have already said that Pitoëff's acting suggested to me a brother rather than a husband. This was probably a devious way of finding a substitute for the original ambiguity in the

situation. But that is not all. There is a detail in the film which was not specified in the script. (A surprising thing when one thinks of the meticulous descriptions in which Robbe-Grillet indulges.) When the camera, twice in the film, arrives near the room where the theatricals take place, the script describes: "Lastly a framed theatre poster for a play with a foreign, meaningless title." In the film, this poster is seen twice: the title of the play is foreign, but *not* meaningless. It is ROSMER.

Rosmer . . . Rebecca West . . . Dr. West . . . Kroll . . .

It is not the usual title of Ibsen's play *Rosmersholm*, but it could easily be. One recalls instantly the most intriguing scene of the play when Kroll, brother of the late Mrs. Rosmer, reveals to Rebecca West that her adoptive father Dr. West, the man who took care of her after her mother's death might have been her own father. Rebecca seems upset far beyond her alleged concern not to be an illegitimate daughter. She never admits any clear motive for her torment, but the spectator cannot help remembering that Rebecca, on the threshold of triumph, has unexpectedly turned down Rosmer's offer to marry her, and in her last scene with Rosmer she refers to "her past" to convince him that marriage is impossible. There are several allusions to this mysterious event in her past, strongly suggesting that she has been Dr. West's mistress. There is never in the play any open assertion of incest, but Ibsen's intention of planting it indirectly in our minds is obvious enough. Several commentators have noted it, and Freud, following Otto Rank, has tried to relate it to the father-daughter relationship between Rebecca and Rosmer—but this is another story.

I feel absolutely unable to accept such a coincidence as fortuitous. Only Resnais could tell us whether the choice of the title *Rosmer* was unconscious or deliberate, but the fact that Robbe-Grillet's suggestion of incest is replaced by another hint to the same effect cannot be attributed to chance. We must therefore take it as significant—slightly more recondite, but nevertheless detectable. The brother-sister incestuous relationship is a perfectly acceptable substitute for the father-daughter one, in this case where the general attitude of the "brother" is more that of a guardian than that of a lover. It is

(Continued on page 153)

Giorgio Albertazzi and Delphine Seyrig: the process of persuasion.



THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE RUNNER



TWO BRITISH

Both pursue the current
novels, young players, realis

(above left) plays th
of the Long Distance Runner,

Tony Richardson (left) d
The L-Shaped Room, about a

the heroine is played by Le
the American Negro actor B

Above: on the set; right:

THE L-SHAPED ROOM



NEW H FILMS

trends: adaptations from
ic settings. Tom Courtenay
e Borstal boy in *The Loneliness*
from Alan Sillitoe's story;
irects. In Bryan Forbes'
girl living in a London lodging,
eslie Caron, with Tom Bell and
rock Peters also in the cast.
eslie Caron and Bryan Forbes.



FESTIVALS

Cannes/Mar del Plata



Wajda's "Siberian Lady Macbeth".

Cannes

THIRTY-SIX COUNTRIES COMPETING, about a hundred films scheduled for showing out of festival, an enterprising week of films by young directors organised by the French Critics' Association: obviously this was going to be the busiest year at Cannes for some time. Under this massive onslaught of celluloid, with the inevitably high percentage of the nondescript or rubbishy, one was forced to rely on hunches or a lucky dip.

Anyone sampling the entries from the younger African states was quickly disillusioned on finding them the work of tired French directors. But some countries with previously undistinguished festival records managed to come up with surprises. Yang Kwei Fei (or, to use its appealing English title, *The Magnificent Concubine*) was a lavish Chinese production by the redoubtable Mr. Run Run Shaw, movie tycoon of Hong Kong and Singapore, which took the same story as Mizoguchi's famous film, omitted the poetry, and turned it into a prettified Chinese calendar. The real "sleeper", though,

was Brazil's *The Promise*. Although scarcely deserving the accolade of the Grand Prix, it told a story of religious intolerance with an emotional fervour which brought this susceptible audience to its feet. (The unexpected Jury decision, incidentally, caught many reporters on the hop: jostling around the Press Office as the awards came in, one heard anguished cries of "My God, I didn't see it. Who made it? Was it any good?")

Double bills are particularly hard to take in a crowded festival, and Bresson was right in insisting on a half-hour interval before the showing of his *Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*. Lasting only sixty-five minutes, this is his most concentrated film to date. Working from the official transcript of the trial, Bresson presents a Joan who is self-possessed, resilient but vulnerable, and sustained by that sense of grace which Bresson allows all his heroes. Alternating between court and cell, much of the film consists simply of dialogues between Joan and her accusers: one scarcely sees the onlookers and there are no dramatic outbursts. "Television technique," jeered the film's opponents; but nothing could be further from the truth. Bresson's control of rhythm and movement has never been

more confident. Consequently, this slow and deliberate accumulation of detail makes the climax almost unbearable. It begins with a shot of bare feet pattering over the cobbles, then pausing imperceptibly before the stake; and after this Bresson spares us nothing in either sound or picture. Somewhere amidst the crackling faggots, the sparks and the smoke, a girl is dying: when the blaze dies away all that remains is the charred stake. The experience is complete.

In a festival containing work by so many distinguished veterans (Renoir, Buñuel, Bresson), it was worth noting that, more often than not, they obtained their results by totally ignoring the rules laid down by all the best teachers and film schools. (The Cannes audience, though, liking to see "direction" on the screen, tends to reserve its applause for the big, unmistakable cinematic strokes.) Never the tidiest of directors, Renoir has of late come to rely increasingly on intuition; and *Le Caporal Epingle*, as loosely constructed as ever, is held together by sheer force of personality. Whereas *La Grande Illusion* was essentially a tragic analysis of men trapped by the rules of war, this new prisoner-of-war film mixes gentle satire with slapstick, gleeful irony with shrewd observation. A completely serious scene, such as the death of the fugitive prisoner-of-war's friend, sometimes seems misjudged in its context; but Renoir's unique comic sense and generosity of spirit overcome most of the danger points.

By contrast, Michael Cacoyannis' version of *Electra* suffers from a surfeit of visible technique, with the sound and fury defiantly whipped-up. I liked the rocky locations and the treatment of the chorus—little groups of black-garbed women turning to deliver their lines in intimate close-up—but the film's wild romantic bravura and portentous slowness need finer shading than Cacoyannis has been able to bring to it. One of the best moments is the reunion between Electra and her brother; and Irene Pappas, with her deep, vibrant voice, makes the most of it.

The title of the new Buñuel, *The Exterminating Angel*, is as enigmatic as its content. A group of aristocrats assembled for a party in a palatial mansion suddenly find themselves unable to leave, without any of them being able to offer a rational explanation. From this initial situation, Buñuel draws on most of his favourite themes from *L'Age d'Or* onwards, relentlessly following his characters as they quarrel, copulate, die, or satisfy their hunger by roasting a lamb in the middle of the drawing-room. Is the film a zany surrealist leg-pull or another allegory of a society imprisoned by its own fears and superstitions? My guess is that it is a bit of both; and, at the same time, Buñuel's funniest picture. Those who hunt for symbols and clues will be defeated: Buñuel simply conjures up a world of illusion, in which some of the tricks, admittedly, come off better than others. Like the best conjurers, he rounds off his curious entertainment with a brilliant joke.

This year, America's entries included not only films from the big companies but also a sizeable quantity of independent production. Sidney Lumet's three-hour version of *Long Day's Journey into Night* is notable for its reverence for O'Neill's great text and the subtle, dark-hued tones of Boris Kaufman's lighting. This is superior filmed theatre played by a dedicated cast (Hepburn, Richardson, Stockwell), which could have been better if the director had reworked some of the performances to meet the demands of the camera eye.

Judging by the latest work of the Drew-Leacock team responsible for last year's *Primary*, American documentary has discovered a new dynamic. *Football* shows the training of two rival high school teams and uncovers a philosophy in which defeat is deemed worse than death. This is camera comment of the highest order: a complete world is revealed, as we follow the hard-faced coaches weaving round their teams, or watch the sickening crowd hysteria, or the extraordinary moment when the team settles down in scrum formation to say the Lord's Prayer. Despite ragged sound

and the persistent wavering of the hand-held cameras, every foot of this film is alive.

A personality from the past: Harold Lloyd, still genially bespectacled, and overjoyed to find that people remembered his pictures, recalled his incredible stunts and seemed quite prepared to clamber down from the balcony following a screening of his film compilation. Watching these marvellous chases, with their split-second timing and effortless invention, the festival's recurring images of pain and defeat receded into the distance, and the world outside seemed a little brighter.

JOHN GILLET

THE ITALIANS HAD THE biggest scandal and, for me, the best film of the Festival. The scandal broke out on the opening day: *Boccaccio '70*, Carlo Ponti's four-episode film directed by De Sica, Fellini, Visconti and Monicelli, had been a great success all over Italy, and Cannes was to be the springboard for the world market. But Ponti and the American distributors felt that the film was too long, and decided to cut Monicelli's episode out. In fact, the De Sica and the Fellini sections were to my mind so boring, ill-made and vulgar that they were virtually expendable. The Monicelli, of course, we never saw; but the Visconti episode, apart from a slow beginning, was an extremely curious and moving piece. Romy Schneider gives one of her best performances as the rich wife of a poor young Milanese count much addicted to the more exotic pleasures provided by high-class tarts. She tries to break away, even to get a job, but she is suited for nothing: the only function she can serve is sexual. So, casting away all pride, she seeks advice from her husband's favourite call-girl. When the count hears this, he is overjoyed. Pausing only to put on a new pair of silk pyjamas, he throws himself on her ecstatically, completely oblivious to her tears and shame.

Visconti's viciously ironic comment on the status of women in contemporary society got a little overlooked in the flow of protests, deputations and resignations caused by the Monicelli affair. Antonioni and Germi, both of whom had films in the Festival, were forbidden to come near the Palais. At a press conference, Antonioni stated that although he did not completely agree with the way the affair was being handled, he had decided to go along with the Italian Society of Film Authors in their battle against the producers. Ironically



"Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc".



"The Eclipse": Monica Vitti and Alain Delon.

enough, he was himself to be their next victim. Between the morning and evening performances of *The Eclipse*, the producers decided to cut two minutes from the climax of the film. That morning there had been a few whistles, and the Frères Hakim were not taking any chances on a repeat of the *L'Avventura* débâcle of two years ago. It didn't do them any good, however, for the film was still not very well received, although for the life of me I can't see why. In some ways, it is far more accessible than either *L'Avventura* or *La Notte*.

Baldly stated, the film is concerned with the problem of the importance of sexual passion. Piero and Vittoria are physically attracted to each other, but decide to part when they discover that there is no possibility of any sort of communication between them other than the sexual one. Piero is a new figure for Antonioni: a young and dynamic broker, he is interested in getting ahead, in making money, to the exclusion of everything else. Vittoria is a more complex character: a self-made girl, she is more intellectual, more serenely above the struggle, and highly sensitive to what I suppose we must call Nature. Tranquillity and peace represent her ideal, and this is magnificently expressed by Antonioni in the sequence at the Verona airport. A cool breeze blowing down from Shelley's Euganean hills; the warm, white light of a late summer afternoon; a few small airplanes trailing through the sky; desultory scraps of overheard conversation; three or four American pilots relaxing in the sun; a juke-box softly playing; here and only here does Vittoria find that sense of limpid well-being (*Come sto bene qui!*) for which she craves. A well-being that Piero and the others can only find in Equanil.



In a sense, *The Eclipse* is more objective, more visual, than Antonioni's other films: more is said by objects—decor, landscapes, things—than by the dialogue. The film could be fairly well understood without the sound track, and this is an important innovation for Antonioni. In fact, Piero and Vittoria's ultimate decision to part is conveyed entirely wordlessly: the film ends with an extremely complex seven minute sequence of views and objects, expressing not only their failure to turn up for a rendezvous, but also Antonioni's feelings about contemporary civilisation and its influence on the emotions. The expression of these beliefs is probably the most contestable aspect of *The Eclipse*, but contributes essentially to the film's density and richness.

Ex-aequo with the Bresson film, *The Eclipse* won the special Jury Prize: I think it deserved the Grand Prix. Completely overlooked when the prizes were being given out was Satyajit Ray's *Devi*. It is difficult to write about Ray without descending into a kind of humanistic gush about his feeling for faces, for people, the simplicity of his direction and the warmth of his portrayal of human relations. But all these things, however damp they sound, are true. Apart from his tendency to move into over-long close-ups of immobile faces at the end of each scene, *Devi* is Ray's most controlled and concentrated work. A young girl becomes an object of mystical reverence because her fanatical father-in-law believes her to be a reincarnation of the goddess Kali. At first incredulous, the girl slowly begins to believe and to submit dreamily to her fate. In spite of her husband's desperate attempts to salvage their marriage, he is unable to save her. The story sounds fairly remote, but more universal applications are not difficult to find; and the exotic nature of the material is soon forgotten in its depth of insight and visual beauty.

One of the Festival's few real surprises, and one of those films in the hope of which one got up early day after day to slink along to the cinemas on the Rue d'Antibes, was *The Siberian Lady Macbeth*. Produced by one of Yugoslavia's most enterprising studios, and directed by Poland's Andrzej Wajda, the film is an adaptation of a short story by the nineteenth century Russian writer Leskov. Wajda has abandoned his usual baroque style, to tell with great simplicity and considerable power of a Lady Macbeth who kills not for ambition but for love. Married to a merchant much older than herself, bored with life in a primitive provincial town, Lady Macbeth from Mtsensk proves an easy match for an ambitious young clerk. Exalted by her love, she sweeps away all obstacles—her husband, her father-in-law, even a small child. Wajda succeeds in achieving not only a sense of period and place, but also that suggestion of timelessness which belongs to tragedy.

Another exciting out of festival offering was Jacques (Goha) Baratier's *La Poupée*. Based on a novel by the avant-garde writer Jacques Audiberti, this is an insane extravaganza set in a mythical South American country. The principal role, that of a left-wing Joan of Arc who leads the people to revolution, is played by an American transvestite, Sonne Teal, and the dual role of Generalissimo and young revolutionary by Zbigniew Cybulski. Funniest of all, though, is perhaps Jacques Dufilho, as the Inca nanny whose lullabies punctuate the film. Although put together rather carelessly, *La Poupée* is deliriously savage and way, way out.

Although Cannes was dominated this year by films from established directors, there were four good pictures by hitherto little-known talents. The most remarkable was Agnès Varda's *Cléo de Cinq à Sept*, soon to be seen in London and reviewed elsewhere. Then there was *Les Oliviers de la Justice*, a French film made in Algeria by a young American. James Blue, ex-student at IDHEC, has lived in Bab-el-Oued for the past two years, and this is his first feature. Set in Algiers during what are tactfully called "les événements", it tells a simple story of a

Buñuel's "The Exterminating Angel".

young man, born in Algeria but since settled in Paris, who comes home on the occasion of his father's death. The whole film consists in the confrontation of his childhood memories with the reality of Algeria today. His decision to return home for good has been interpreted by some as propaganda for Algérie Française; but happily the film is not on such a simple level. Plainly but effectively directed, it is restrained, fresh and immediate.

Exasperatingly experimental, overloaded with influences, and often tiresomely avant-garde, Hubert Wessely's *The Bread of the Early Years* is still the best German film I have seen in many years. Underneath its arsenal of effects, the film has a lot to say about the German economic miracle. "Everything was planned, everything arranged; we were to be married in the autumn; he had a car, a good salary, a secure future; what more could he have wanted?" That "something more" is the theme of a more than promising work. Contemporary youth is also the subject of a light-hearted and witty Italian film, *I Nuovi Angeli*. In nine episodes, we move from the tribal rites of present-day Sicily to the new middle-class on the beach at Rimini. A first film by a new director from television, Ugo Gregoretti, this was the best and most perceptive comedy in the Festival.

RICHARD ROUD

Mar del Plata

MAR DEL PLATA—the Cannes of Argentina, one hour's flight to the coast from Buenos Aires—has now had four film festivals. It has become the only established competitive event of the kind in Latin America, and the organisers, Ariel Cortazzo and José Dominianni, have succeeded in placing it on the same level as the principal festivals in Europe. Mar del Plata is mercifully free from top tourists; the last of the regular Argentinian holiday-makers lay by the sea in the autumnal March sun, and at night they stood loyally outside the hotels to cheer the stars.

The star who stole the festival was the Russian actress Nadezhda Rumiantseva, present to enjoy an overwhelming reception quite out of proportion to her actual achievement in the Russian entry *Devotchka* (*Girls*). The film has a Pollyanna heroine, a young canteen manageress determined to overcome her boisterous lumberjack lover by scorn. Nadezhda Rumiantseva larks her way through this Russian *Taming of the Shrew* without any restraint; with firmer, more subtle direction than Yuri Tchuliukin gives her she will no doubt become a good comedy actress. But her youth, charm and tireless energy won her an acting award.

The Communist countries were generously represented, notably by a Czechoslovakian film of great charm, *Trapeni*, written and directed by Karel Kachyna and called in Mar del Plata *The Sorrows of Lenka*. This film was so like *Crin Blanc* that the small girl in it who befriends an ill-used stallion goes to bed in tears after seeing an extract from the French film on Czech television. Apart from this rather odd form of acknowledgment, *The Sorrows of Lenka* has a 12-year-old heroine of unusual strength of character and a quite unsentimental treatment of children. At the other extreme was the utterly false sentimentality of *Yanco*, a Mexican film about a peasant boy violinist which drew shouts of appreciation from the audience.

The principal awards went to France and Italy, with the Jury voting against the popular response of the audience. The reception given to Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* was almost acrimonious, but he took the award for the best direction. The destructive wit of this film meant nothing to the Argentinian audience, who no doubt feel themselves apart from the particular negativism of the *nouvelle vague*, and who in any case had problems enough of their own going on outside the

theatre. The warmer irony of the Italian film, Elio Petri's *I Giorni Contati*, which won the Grand Prix, was better understood. A working-class man past fifty years old is so afraid of dying that he gives up his job, draws his savings and adopts the life of so-called pleasure in which, at the end, he finds there is nothing to enjoy. *I Giorni Contati* is a film of subtle humour that would gain a great deal, in my view, by being shortened.

But the revelation of the festival was the work of a group of young Argentinian film-makers. One of their films, shown apart from the festival, was a feature-length comedy called *Los Inundados* (*The Flooded People*) written and directed by Fernando Birri and sponsored by Productora America Nuestra, a company set up to make films that give a true picture of Latin American life. *Los Inundados* was produced with the assistance of the staff and students of the Institute of Cinematography of the National University of Litoral in Santa Fe, the training school for film-makers in the Argentine. Apart from two principal players, the actors are all non-professional; the story centres on one of the families who live in a shanty settlement in an area of the Santa Fe province that floods every year, leaving the welfare of its inhabitants in the hands of the local authorities. This particular family ends up by camping in a railway van which is shunted from village to village, until eventually the inaction and indecision of the officials responsible is resolved by the subsidence of the floods and the family's return to their impermanent home. This film has the liveliness and gaiety in melancholy surroundings of some of the post-war Italian realist comedies, by which it has evidently been influenced; Birri graduated from the Centro Sperimentale in Rome some ten years ago.

Three Annes, one of the two Argentinian films shown in competition, was written and directed by David José Kohon and shows strong European influences in its *nouvelle vague* disillusionment. Maria Vaner plays three different types of girl who are all called Anne, and whose point in common is that they provide varied studies in "love and loneliness", stories of failure set against a background of disillusionment. The second film is more impressive because it seems less derivative and more understanding of the particular problems facing the young generation in the Argentine. This is *Los Jovenes Viejos* (*Aged Youth*) written and directed by Rodolfo Kuhn; and it reveals changing values without any pretentiousness in the story of three young men from Buenos Aires who, restless and searching for companionship, find it in three very different girls living in Mar del Plata. Again Maria Vaner plays the principal girl. Though overlong and at times too explicit about the differences between these love affairs, *Los Jovenes Viejos* is both directed and acted with great sympathy; it is Kuhn's first attempt at feature direction and a considerable achievement.

ROGER MANVELL



"Los Jovenes Viejos".



SLING THE LAMPS LOW

PETER
JOHN
DYER

THERE IS NO DIFFICULTY IN appreciating the appeal of a Howard Hawks film to two kinds of people—the *Cahiers* camp-follower and the ex-*Cahiers* film-maker. The first is gratified that such a suave operator should share his tastes (the shock effect, the classy pulp thriller, an almost adolescent view of human relationships in a predominantly masculine world) and his apparent disavowals (social and psychological preoccupation and the big subject). The second, headed by Truffaut and Rivette, senses in Hawks's uneven, comparatively anonymous career one of the classic problems of the honestly uncommitted, non-political, craftsman: the conservation of verve, judgment and repute over a lifetime devoted to the comparatively unessential.

Truffaut and Rivette have both, in widely differing styles, started their careers with "important" themes; but they did not set out to make an important picture *per se*, and somehow one doesn't look to them in the future for definitive statements. Similarly Hawks, excited by Murnau's *Sunrise*, made a film with trick effects on an urgent subject very early in his career. This was *Paid to Love* in 1927, when he was 31. One of a story-cycle of films about the older generation caught up in the jazz age, and praised for its technique ("People were easily impressed in those days," Hawks has commented), it was his first and last experimental film. Ever since he has concentrated on direct, vigorous interpretation of generally unremarkable stories. His best films have often been his most unoriginal (*Scarface*, *Ball of Fire*, *Rio Bravo*); his worst his most ambitious (*Sergeant York* and *The Land of the Pharaohs*). One gets the impression of a man who is modest yet vaguely disinterested; who has it all mapped out, retaining his freshness by restricting himself to a film a year, very rarely more and of late rather less; a man sufficiently resilient if set in his ways to go on attracting neophytes and satisfying the devout.

What about the rest of us, the infidels who recognise that Hawks's films are a cut above the ordinary but who still rate Ford a richer director of Westerns, Preston Sturges a far more passionate director of comedies, John Huston's *Maltese Falcon* a more memorable thriller than *The Big Sleep* and William Wellman's career, the one most closely comparable to Hawks's in its shared enthusiasms and all-round expertise, as having a more marked continuity of highlights? We, as it happens, are the audience Hawks has always in mind. Every film he makes assumes our existence as intelligent non-devotees, people who will recognise what is on the screen as being interesting, communicable anti-Art, insignificant and full of narrative dexterity. One somehow feels that he would take this inability to detect a distinct unity or individualism of style in his work as a compliment.

Hawks's scripts may be unaspiring, his technique mainly functional, his attitude to the industry politic, but at least he has avoided the terrible plight of the director suddenly "discovered" by the critics for his social awareness (if he works in Hollywood he is rarely discovered for anything else) and dependent thereafter on merely technical and financial resources and an increasingly desperate succession of flabby liberal gestures. At the same time he perpetuates "myth" conventions that intrigue the intellectual rather more than the rigged realism of most American socially committed films.

Hawks is a romantic. He speaks in a heightened, idealised language they ought to understand to all who would love to pioneer, whether a cattle empire, a pyramid, a scientific unit at the North Pole or an air postal service over the Andes. He is fascinated by men in action, in danger, face to face with death. His outdoor films are full of sudden ambushes, bullet-extractions and laconic colloquies about dying. His indoor films are peopled by eccentrics, girls who hover like shrill birds of prey above an anonymous expanse of respectable urban roof, swooping to earth just long enough to snatch up some vulnerable, equally eccentric booby of a professor who has

been hiding his disappointed longing for adventure behind horn-rims and a wall of books devoted to some outlandish project—a rejuvenating elixir, a lexicon of slang, the completion of a prehistoric reptile's skeleton. Hawks can't help admiring those who come and get it, from the gangster who takes as his inspiration the Cook's sign which flashes out "The World Is Yours" to the show-girls who call in at Shinbone or Barranca or Martinique for a drink and a get-together round the piano and who end up cooking the hero's breakfast. He likes things to move fast (so fast that there is generally a sag in invention two-thirds of the way through between the situation peak and the pay-off) and consequently has little time for neurosis or psychological abnormality. The mystery of life, courage and sudden death is something he prefers to take out of the realm of everyday experience into an acceptance of the shamus's hidden Mecca (the elusive Arabian Nights underworld in *The Big Sleep*) or the lost grail of the Western pioneer.

2

Already the paradox is becoming apparent. On the one hand there is the apparent "square"—the man who stood out longer than most against colour (irrelevant to his world of drab concrete, adobe and nocturnal menace?) and who regards CinemaScope as a clumsy drag on pace and concentration; whose films are shot consistently at eye-level, so that at the end of a day's viewing one is almost shocked to notice an isolated set-up in which the camera is actually peering down over a gunman's shoulder from a landing to the saloon below; whose methods of emphasis (reduced rhythm) and expectancy (cross-cutting between hero and villain as they converge for their showdown) might be considered academic.

The same "squareness" applies to Hawks's choice of subject. He has never taken on anything he presumably feels to be outside his range (a tear-jerker, a small-town Dean Stockwell vehicle, a problem picture like *Fourteen Hours* which, since he disapproves of suicides, he told Zanuck he would only make as a Cary Grant bedroom comedy); though he invented Lauren Bacall, he can in no way be described as an innovator. Doubtless this accounts for his unexpected absence from Lewis Jacobs' *Rise of the American Film*, a book which instead mentions the director, William Wellman, who seems on occasion to have acted as some sort of pace-maker for Hawks. Wellman made *Wings*, Hawks countered with *Dawn Patrol*; Wellman's *Public Enemy* was succeeded by *Scarface*, his *Nothing Sacred* by Hawks's *His Girl Friday*; and when Hawks got in first with *Ball of Fire* Wellman snapped back with both *Roxie Hart* and *Lady of Burlesque*. But whenever Wellman has mounted the platform, as in *The Ox-Bow Incident*, Hawks has demurred, disarmingly requesting a story he can treat as comedy, and as drama only in the last resort.

It is one of his trademarks frequently to describe his films as being Directed (in large letters) and produced (below, in smaller letters) by Howard Hawks: not for him the prestige picture, the statement, the blockbuster. Rather is he content to adapt his craftsmanship to whatever happens to be the current cycle, working with top-line cameramen, established actors who reflect his own tough, unaffected proficiency (Barthelme, Bogart, Wayne) and one particular writer, Jules Furthman, whose career stretches from Sternberg's *Underworld* in 1927 to *Rio Bravo* in 1959. As if to compensate for his limited range he finds within his chosen elements, the sky and the outback, the freedom and optimism of the pioneer. The city, by contrast, depresses him as a place of inhibition, of wings clipped by money, domesticity and routine.

The durability of Hawks's films lies in the way that they have a mysterious life of their own going on under their familiar, facile surfaces. It is the constant cross-graining of cliché and inventive detail which produces the shock of pleasure his best work provides; and which invites a more detailed scrutiny of his career than one might feel keen to bring to many of his commercially adept generation.

Opposite. Above: Boris Karloff in "Scarface". Below: Humphrey Bogart as Philip Marlowe in "The Big Sleep".

Though at least one of his silent films, *A Girl in Every Port* (1928, with Louise Brooks), is highly regarded in France, and his first talkie, *The Dawn Patrol* (1930), was a popular success, *Scarface* (1932) was the film which established Hawks as a director to watch. His previous gangster picture, *The Criminal Code* (1931), was apparently a straightforward adaptation from the stage, without personality. *Scarface*, a relentless record of the career of Tony Camonte/Al Capone, was cold, planned cinema to a degree bordering on the geometric. With *Rio Bravo*, it shares the twin distinction of an almost callous alternation between comedy and violence, and of placing its boldest strokes of camera strategy at the beginning.

Opening on a brooding street lamp, each successive visual point is ticked off like items on an inventory: the gangland stag party; the cleaner tearing down streamers and coming across a brassière; the long travelling shot which follows the lurching progress of the solitary man in a paper hat to answer the 'phone; the pan right to trace the sound of an intruder's whistling; his shadow and that of the window, thrown against the wall; a greeting, the first two words spoken in the film, from the unsuspecting victim; the sound of a shot; the throwing away of the murder weapon; the return pan to take in the dead body on the floor. The whole ten-minute sequence is done in one take, with constant changes from long-shot to close-shot, the camera weaving through a semi-circular set honeycombed with interiors, 400 feet long, and ranging from 75-foot buildings to a back hall only 10 feet high.

The same economical, not to say tight-lipped continuity is maintained throughout. Only the violence becomes more explicit, whether in the background—the open references to police brutality—or in the alarming impression one gets of having a grandstand view of Camonte's countless kills. These central passages, marred only by some horribly overacted rhetoric when a group of dignitaries accuse a newspaper editor of glorifying the gangster, justify the cumulative exhilaration of their retail and wholesale massacre by the delicate assurance



of the muted intervals in between. Instead of numbing the tension, the endless violence increases it by reasonably implying that its agents are either apes or children, in any case unpredictable, and by permeating it with something more unnatural, something recondite and screwy, in Camonte's attachment to his sister.

Though *Scarface* still survives today as an almost documentary picture of a criminal era and as an unnervingly well orchestrated concerto for machine-gun, it is particularly interesting for the light it throws on Hawks's subsequent career. Almost everything one has come to expect from him is already there: the menace behind each detail of a slow, circular camera tour round a crowded room; the sound of a howling dog, sole remaining witness of a blood-bath; the screwing-up of fear through innocent things like whistling a tune and flipping a coin, until the stubbing out of a cigarette comes as a climax and the crash of a hand through a glass door as a comparative relief. The lighting, with Venetian blinds casting shadows up and down the walls, is as redolent of the Thirties as the black trilbies rammed squarely just above the policemen's ears. For the first time one notices the trademark Hawks never abandons—a surly, broad-shaded light or oil-lamp slung as low as possible from the ceiling. The lower the lamp, the heavier the tension and the more beautiful the pattern of shadows: the panic-ridden scene of Karloff holed up with a reporter in a cellar is the most pictorially complex effect in the film.

The relationships are just as inaugural. Paul Muni's Camonte attracts friends who are brave, dapper and loyal (George Raft); he acts as nursemaid to a helplessly illiterate bodyguard who provides (quite legitimately) comic relief; his mistress (Karen Morley), hard-boiled and monosyllabic, is an embryonic version of the Hawks heroine. Unfortunately these rather novelettish characterisations conspire against the film's moral force, and with their removal from the scene Ben Hecht's script plunges into maudlin hysteria. All that is left is this shaky hint of incest which Hawks, too unsympathetic to any such aberration to investigate it at all helpfully, uses as a romantic device for sealing up brother and sister in a steel-shuttered armoury where the one can go mad and the other catch a stray bullet. In itself, Hawks obviously likes the scene—it is powerfully conveyed by Muni and Ann Dvorak—sufficiently to echo it in the finale of *Land of the Pharaohs*, where Joan Collins is walled up with Jack Hawkins in the pyramid.

4

Hawks attempted nothing as ambitious for nine years. Unfortunately only two of the nine films he made after *Scarface* seem to be available today, and one is forced to rely on cuttings of the period to obtain any idea of his development. Obviously the critics found it hard to shake off the opinion they had formed of Hawks as a brilliant technician. *Twentieth Century* (1934), a satire on theatrical temperament starring John Barrymore and Carole Lombard and written by Hecht and Charles MacArthur, is among Hawks's own favourites as a comedy "three or four years ahead of its time," with its dramatic leads playing in a style of frenzied, self-mocking burlesque. Greatly admired today whenever it is shown abroad, it embarrassed C. A. Lejeune at the time by depending for its effects on the antics of a religious maniac. Others, shocked by Hawks's disinclination to move his camera, preferred to discuss the acting.

The other main criticism levelled against Hawks during the Thirties concerned his dialogue. First National themselves found it "insipid" in *Dawn Patrol* and refused the film a première. Similarly *Today We Live* (1933), the story of an ambulance girl (Joan Crawford) in Belgium during the war,

Early Hawks: Donald Crisp in the silent version of "Trent's Last Case".

was attacked by Lejeune for its "intolerably heavy, noble, stout fella style"; she went on "only the pace and crispness of the war scenes, in the air and on the water, remind you that Howard Hawks directed." Finally, there is the case of *Barbary Coast* (1935), a Goldwyn Production adapted by Hecht and MacArthur from a journalist's account of the maladministration of San Francisco during the gold rush. For the first time Hawks was attacked for turning rawly authentic material inside out and producing an innocuous formula picture.

Already the pattern is becoming clear. On the one hand praise for his action scenes (the tuna-fishing sequence in *Tiger Shark*, 1932) and his repertory company of character actors (Walter Brennan in *Barbary Coast*); whole-hearted, universal approval reserved for *Ceiling Zero* (1936, Cagney and Pat O'Brien), a he-man comedy-melodrama of commercial aviation, and *The Crowd Roars* (1932), a motor-racing yarn, also with Cagney. On the other hand criticism of turgid dialogue and conventional characterisation (heroines spinning a neat roulette wheel) in his more romantic action pieces, and of static camerawork and extremist behaviour in his comedies. These impressions, though not necessarily the critical conclusions drawn from them, are confirmed by recent viewings of *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939) and *Bringing Up Baby* (1938).

Childish, banal, phony and enjoyable, *Only Angels Have Wings* is the prototype of the inside-out Hawks adventure film. Hawks's story, dialogued by Jules Furthman, is frankly terrible. A small group of reckless pilots employed by a cuddly, impecunious Dutchman (Sig Ruman) faces death daily in flights over the fog-bound Andes. Suddenly a New York chorus-girl (Jean Arthur) arrives in their midst ("I quit a show at Valparaiso"). The moment she lets slip that her trapeze artist father lost his life through not using a net, a bond is forged between her and the disillusioned skipper (Cary Grant). When the cause of his disillusion (Rita Hayworth) turns up as the wife of a new pilot named Bat (Richard Barthelmess) whose cowardice once caused the death of the brother of Grant's best friend Kid (Thomas Mitchell), the complications have become as unlikely as their resolution is predictable. As the only available flyer, Bat volunteers for a dangerous mission, Kid insists on going with him, the plane crashes into a flock of condors and catches fire. Bat refuses to bale out and executes a daring landing, allowing the mortally injured Kid just time enough to gasp out the heroic details.

Inside the big cliché are the small ones: the equation of maturity with an acceptance of sudden death; the heroine playing Liszt in the lounge at one a.m.; the stiff-upper-lip inventory of the dead pilot's belongings; the pseudo-tough byplay accompanying the lighting of a cigarette or the flipping of a double-headed coin; the probing for the bullet in the hero's shoulder; the nursemaid relationship between him and the old friend too blind to fly, who insists on coming too. It would be useless to pretend that this anthology of Hawksisms doesn't eventually pall. What in fact keeps the film going is the tension engendered by watching a factitious, dead-beat understratum, fertilised by the heat of some daringly executed aerial scenes, sprout through the cracks of a plot as heavy as concrete until it has taken on a rich, mossy life of its own. As in *Scarface*, the sets are almost tactile in their rambling detail. The whole seaport, from a docked freighter to a composite structure of bamboo serving as the saloon, hotel and airways headquarters, was built at the Columbia ranch and populated with palms, condors, parrots, macaws, and any number of Venetian blinds and low-slung lamps. Once one has accepted the "reality" of an impressively graphic flight in bad weather, actually witnessed contact between the crashing plane and the palm tree whose top it slices off, and collided in mid-air with a condor, one can accept anything. Or almost anything, for just as Miss Lejeune found Miriam Hopkins's arrival in Frisco on a square-rigged Cape Horn clipper the best thing in *Barbary Coast*, nothing here quite matches up to Jean Arthur's disembarkation from a banana boat at Barranca.



"Self-mocking burlesque": Billie Seward and John Barrymore in "Twentieth Century".

Hawks regards comedy and melodrama as interdependent and interchangeable. Katharine Hepburn has a bit of business, a comic walk, arising from a broken heel in *Bringing Up Baby* that Hawks obviously liked enough to ask Jean Arthur to work it into *Angels*. In *The Big Sky* the amputation of Kirk Douglas's gangrenous finger is played for laughs. In *His Girl Friday* (1939, Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell), a comedy *réchauffé* of Milestone's *The Front Page*, Hawks retains the death cell background and the suicide of the prostitute.

His equation of embarrassment in comedy with danger in melodrama as examples of people pushed into uncomfortable circumstances, and his mixing of the two genres, is not original in the context of other films of the period (c.f. *Roxie Hart* and *Nothing Sacred*). What is unusual is the extremities to which he pushes his comedy characters and, with them, the plot. If *Bringing Up Baby*, a good example of this, is a less satisfying fantasy than his later *Ball of Fire*, it is partly due to the limitations of clockwork farce, partly to its prolongation of the victim's discomfiture. The opening, typically Hawksian in its attack, puts Cary Grant's staid palaeontologist at the mercy of a fixated heiress (Hepburn) who involves him in a wildly coincidental adventure of disasters involving a tame but hungry leopard. The slapstick is done with verve and enthusiasm, Hawks's deliberately unobtrusive camera dogging the actors, themselves in constant pursuit of the leopard and a bad-tempered terrier. A witty screenplay knocks several of Hawks's *bêtes noires* (psychiatrists, big game hunter bores), and allows latitude for plenty of Hepburn's extempore, maddeningly bright asides. Surveying a vast garden uprooted at her behest by the terrier, and genuinely anxious to help Grant find his priceless stolen fossil, she remarks that "what we need is a plough": this, mark you, in the middle of the night. Eventually, however, the machine-gun pace of the cracks and the perpetual running around begin to tell; the situations tend to repeat themselves, the introduction of Barry Fitzgerald's drunken gardener and a second, untamed leopard strikes a more obvious vein of humour, and the confrontation in a police cell of the entire cast *versus* an enraged local constable goes on long enough to underline the essentially mechanical, unfeeling nature of the piece.

Ball of Fire (1941) roots its comic impetus more firmly in the richer, older, more affectionate territory of Manhattan folklore. The story, a tightly-knit amalgam of toughness, crackle and exclusively American sentimentality, tells of the impact of a boogie-woogie singer (Barbara Stanwyck) and her gangster lover on eight learned professors—seven likeable character actors and Gary Cooper—engaged in compiling an encyclopaedia. Having dealt with Saltpetre and Sex, they break their record of nine years' cloistered research by undertaking a first-hand investigation into Slang. The contrast between a confident, cynical, violent underworld and the deferential society of the common-room was never new; but the execution here is sparkling. Inspired by what must have seemed a piquant variation on his theme of the all-male community, Hawks directs with a faultless sense of timing and surprise. The robust, picturesque script by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder assimilates a number of intramural jokes into the plot fabric, notably the roaring machine-gun intervention in Stanwyck's unwilling wedding to her gangster, identical to a shoot-up scene in *Scarface* and here given an extra twist by having the finger of the meekest of the professors on the trigger. The sets, including the *Magnificent Ambersons*-type house where the professors work, are impeccably detailed; the groupings beautifully composed, lit, and shot in depth by Gregg Toland; indeed the whole thing has all the density necessary to carry its superstructure of fantasy.

5

That same year, Hawks made the first of his three wartime war films, and demonstrated—much as *Dawn Patrol* had done—that his talent for reviving real life legends fell short of his flair for creating legends of his own imagining. *Sergeant York* had to be a film without his salient characteristic, surprise: its story of a Tennessee mountain boy whose religious convictions were against war, and how he overcame his scruples and was decorated for killing 25 Germans, had long been celebrated. Denied opportunities for surprise, Hawks seemed lost. Scenes of religious conversion (York's rifle struck by lightning, to the accompaniment of a celestial organ and choir singing the *Ave Maria*) and inner conflict (York settling down on a mountain ledge at sunset with a dog, a Bible and an American history) were as embarrassing as they were trite. The hero's soil-scraping in his forgotten-valley home was

photographed in a tumid, quasi-Russian style, the playing (Gary Cooper, twitchily mannered, as York, Margaret Wycherley as the mother) was that of hillbilly caricature, and the pace dragged.

Air Force (1942), an exhaustive sales-talk on the Boeing 17 and the crew who apparently won the Battle of the Coral Sea single-handed, is of interest purely as an indication of Hawks's temperamental unfitnes for the documented action film. Though his imagination is obviously aroused by the size and purring power of the plane, he cannot bring an equally controlled imagination to his account of the men who fly her. In the context of *Only Angels Have Wings*, cornball characters like the grizzled old-timer, the embittered failure, the enthusiastic rookie whose father had served in the Lafayette Esquadrielle, would have found their own romantic stature. Set against the gun-bristling challenge of an apparently invincible machine, they become personable pygmies. (The same worm of doubt creeps in on the heroics of *Dawn Patrol*, where one has difficulty reconciling the histrionics and the low-key lighting of the mess with the superbly photographed reality of a take-off in the ghostly light of dawn.)

Three years after *Air Force* Hawks directed a film that was in every way more synthetic, more basic, more absurd—and yet certainly more genuine—than his other war films. Shifted from Hemingway's Florida to Warner Brothers' Martinique in 1940, culled shamelessly from the studio Resistance film (*Casablanca*) and *Only Angels Have Wings*, unrecognisably scripted by William Faulkner, *To Have and Have Not* remains the classic Hawks compendium. A lot was made at the time, and understandably, of the parallels with *Casablanca*. The story concerns a tough, sea-going American expatriate (Humphrey Bogart) who at first refuses, then consents to weigh in against the Vichyites by conveying a patriot and his wife from one part of the island to another in exchange for enough money to rescue a sultry lady thief (Lauren Bacall) from low-diver life and a past. The *Casablanca* echoes also take in a Lorre-type intriguer, a Greenstreet-type collaborationist, and a jazz pianist driven by drink to forsake Broadway and provide the tonal background for the lady's inert little songs.

But the elliptical story of *To Have and Have Not* provides as usual a kind of lacuna through which one can squeeze down as eagerly as any pot-holer into an endless, honeycombed substratum of corridor sex, intrigue and nocturnal gunfire yielding just as suddenly to piano-music, an unexplained corpse and the arrival, fat and effeminate, of the *Sûreté*. Faces striving for immobility, phrases about courage which elide any actual mention of death ("I want you round brave but I don't want you useless"): these may indeed spring from Hemingway and the pulp thriller. Beneath them, though, the stream of unexplained thoughts and actions is as intriguing and despotic as that guiding the subterranean boat of any Cocteau poet. Fog and shadow hang thick not only round the hero's speed-boat but round the presence of his nursemaid/hanger-on (Walter Brennan), a toothless lunatic who asks everyone he meets whether they were ever "bit by a dead bee." Without Brennan, without focal characters sufficiently deep-running to carry their own ambience around with them, the film's enigmas would seem tedious and forgettable. Fortunately Bogart gives one of his most economical, human performances; and Bacall, making her debut, ranges from Hepburnian playfulness ("Quit the baby-talk!" Bogart snarls) to a languid, husky command of cigarette-lighting, door-jamb leaning and sex repartee which seems incongruously to anticipate John Wayne's *persona* in *Rio Bravo*. Though perhaps not so incongruously. Hawks is good at the relationship of man to man, and the baritone Bacall, like so many of Hawks's actresses (Jane Russell, Hepburn, Jean Arthur, Elizabeth Threalt) is not so very far distant from boyish masculinity or



"Only Angels Have Wings":
Thomas Mitchell, Jean Arthur and Cary Grant.

the passionate, doom-laden appeal of Fenimore Cooper's duskier heroines.

6

The following year, 1946, marks a turning-point in Hawks's career. Rising, as always, to the occasion of a number of propitious names—Raymond Chandler (book), Faulkner, Leigh Brackett and Furthman (screenplay), Bogart and Bacall—he made in *The Big Sleep* his most dour and classical thriller; then, as if in recognition of the consummation it in fact was, he turned his back on the underworld for good.

Fully acquiescent in the acid, *blasé* heroism of his private eye hero, Hawks jabs and lambasts the spectator through his most openly ferocious film since *Scarface*. Bogart's Philip Marlowe has no respect, no surprise, no attachment, until he meets a general's daughter (Bacall) in the power of gunmen and blackmailers, and is forced to salute a woman who is his counterpart in sullen cynicism. Since the situations and aphoristic dialogue surrounding these two unholy lovers, together with her nymphomaniac, thumb-sucking sister, are as complex as Chinese boxes, Hawks supports the unusual amount of sharp-edged detail involved by a strong, spare camera-style. In rain-drenched, soupy exteriors Marlowe tracks, waits and pounces upon his enemies; inside, within oppressively cluttered or depressingly dowdy sets, he partakes of sex on a thundery afternoon or witnesses sudden death as impassively as if it were an unexpected postal delivery. Hawks takes as his corner-stone an introductory sequence in a hot-house, where the crippled general (existing "largely on heat like a newborn spider") boasts of indulging his vices by proxy and laments two daughters who have "all the usual vices plus those they've invented for themselves." Having thus openly invited us in, like a Borgia nailing a doctor's name-plate to the door, he fascinates while he dispenses, providing a study in social savagery as authentically subconscious as *Doctor Mabuse*.

Though Hawks has never since quite succeeded in shaking off his jaundiced view of the city, his subsequent interior films, nearly all comedies, betray lethargy and lack of conviction. *A Song Is Born* (1947), a superfluous remake of *Ball of Fire* as a Danny Kaye vehicle, and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953, Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe), are among his least interesting films, inflated and lavish on the one hand, technically uninventive and careless on the other. Apparently depressed by the passing of his type of picture, possibly also by the slowing-up process of CinemaScope, he veered between stylistic self-effacement and charmless exaggeration. *You Can't Sleep Here* (1949), a hackneyed and slapdash army farce also known as *I Was A Male War Bride*, involved Cary Grant in the female impersonation act Hawks had already imposed on the actor in odd moments of other films. *Monkey Business* (1952) is better, though as Hawks himself has admitted the rejuvenation theme was carried "a bit far". The opening, a dejected picture of the marital groove, is as astonishing in its ponderous camerawork as it is revealing in its shrugging pessimism. When an 84-year-old chimpanzee starts leaping and swinging from one of Hawks's lowest-slung lamps, or mixing chemicals in silent concentration, the director seems positively hypnotised; later, with a couple of brilliantly funny sequences in which Cary Grant and Ginger Rogers revert to adolescence, he is galvanised into activity and some of his neatest shock cuts. But the overriding impression is one of black mockery, both of himself (the numerous borrowings from *Bringing Up Baby*, the lack of vitality in any scene which doesn't immediately interest him) and of youth, age, marriage, man in the scientific age.

Unsurprisingly, *The Thing From Another World* (1951), an SF-Horror piece produced (and some say directed) by Hawks,

manages to turn its characteristic contrast between the fantastic and the commonplace (a detailed examination of the equipment of U.S. Air Force scientists in the Arctic) into one of Hollywood's most luring comments on the nuclear era. Hawks's nominal dissociation from the film, credited to his cutter, Christian Nyby, is almost symbolic.

There was, then, nothing for it. Hawks had to go back. Stranded in the jet age, no longer anxious to find compensation for the loss of the old pioneer adventure spirit through air films, he found his new heroic image in the American past, silhouetting his trail-blazer against the skies instead of showing him riding through them. Of his three Westerns, the first two (*Red River*, 1947, and *The Big Sky*, 1952) describe gruelling, 1,000-mile treks in the authentic pioneer tradition; while *Rio Bravo* (1959), though restricted within the limits of a besieged township, has a classical refinement and an indomitable spirit which together keep at bay any hint of the chaos and pessimism of Hawks's more recent interior films.

Red River is the least assured of the three. Though strong on detail, background and film sense, it has more success with its account of the broad struggle against rain, drought, hunger and exhaustion than it has in its parallel, personal, love-hate struggle between John Wayne, somewhat overparted as the obsessed wagonmaster, and his foundling son (Montgomery Clift). In the end, already softened by the intrusion of an extraneous *danseuse* of sorts, this uncomfortable relationship explodes in the effeminate clowning of a sham showdown. *The Big Sky* has less size and scope, but is in many respects finer. Kirk Douglas gives one of his most natural, extrovert performances, and his feeling towards the younger man (Dewey Martin, a less tense actor than Clift) has exactly the right air of high-spirited, hot-tempered, casual *camaraderie*. Arthur Hunnicutt's grizzled fur-trapper and Elizabeth Threath's hostage Indian princess, the one a thankfully unactorish edition of the obligatory Brennan character and the other a terse, tough actress in the Bacall tradition, both help to give the film a rough-hewn stature and a dark strain of uncompromising violence which place it among Hawks's more serious works.


Though Hawks's Westerns (and nothing could be basically more familiar than the impeccably made *Rio Bravo*) reject the

(Continued on page 155)



Howard Hawks (extreme right) on location for "The Big Sky" with actors and unit.

C L FILM P S



WHY DON'T WE TAKE HORROR FILMS more seriously? Well, not seriously seriously—I'm not suggesting British adherence to the Monty Berman and Robert Baker cult recently launched in Belgium by the magazine *Script* (who hold that *Hellfire Club* and *The Secret of Monte Cristo* "surclassent nettement tout ce qui est déjà sorti des studios de Sa Majesté")—but seriously enough at least to notice when something interesting is happening in them. Most new horror films don't even get shown to the critics, which is just as well considering how squeamish most of them become at a little healthy blood-letting. But it's a pity all the same, since it means that no one since the demise of *Picturegoer* is willing to look at horror films just for what they are, and judge them accordingly. Of course, one can always say that talent will out, that if there is a worthwhile director cutting his teeth on low-budget creepies now, in a year or two he will be making films that everyone will see, but that is hardly an argument. To begin with, it is often precisely the attention unexpectedly paid to a deserving B-feature that jacks the director up into better things. And then, what if his talent happens after all to be more suited to horror films than anything else? What about the budding James Whales and Jacques Tourneurs, if such there be?

I could give examples. You wouldn't think it from *Two-Way Stretch* (dull) or *The Rebel* (flaccid and patchy), but back in his B-feature days Robert Day was doing some excellent work: *First Man into Space* was (especially considering the limiting conditions in which it was made) a very imaginative piece of sci-fi, while for my money *Grip of the Strangler* was the most stylish and really frightening chiller for many years—in particular, the scenes with Boris Karloff in Cold Harbour Fields caught with remarkable accuracy the Hogarthian, Bedlam-like brand of horror required. Day would probably do well to return to horror if he is given the chance; certainly otherwise the critics and the "discriminating" public are unlikely ever to know how good his best can be.

Similarly with my favourite neglected British director, Vernon Sewell. About 1945 he made a sleeper called *Latin Quarter*, about eerie goings-on in a Parisian artist's garret, which everyone liked (I remember being terrified by it at a very tender age) and which still looks good on television. He followed it up with a rambling supernatural comedy, *Ghosts of Berkeley Square*, still recalled with pleasure, and since then has directed lots of second features and a few firsts, all of them solid and capable. But when the subjects touch on the ghostly he can always be relied on to turn out something really interesting. Just in the last few months there have been two, *The Man in the Back Seat* and *House of Mystery*. In the first, two men drive round London at night with a body to get rid of, and then when they do are hounded to death by hallucinations of the dead man. In the second, a couple visit a house for sale and are told a gruesome tale of adultery and revenge by what turns out to be the ghost of one of the culprits. Both were very enjoyable, full of imaginative touches, and well out of the British second-feature rut; but of course nobody except *The Monthly Film Bulletin* bothered to write about them, and Sewell is left to blush unseen among the B-pictures.

What next? Well, I particularly liked John Moxey's bizarre *City of the Dead*, a ripe piece of nonsense about witchcraft survivals in a mist-bound New England, and Sidney Hayer's *Night of the Eagle*, which as well as all sorts of directorial felicities does have the additional advantage of making sense as a study of psychic attack (pace *The Kine Weekly*, which couldn't make head or tail of it and preferred its unspeakable stable-mate at the London Pav., *She'll Have to Go*). Having liked this and Hayer's previous film *Payroll* very much, I'm looking forward to more. I know people tut-tutted because *Payroll* was flashy and coasted along for much of its time on the edge of absurdity. But why shouldn't it? There are always more than enough competent, conventional, unadventurous directors making serious, dull films; but at least on the evidence of these movies Moxey and Hayer are willing to try something different and play whatever material they are given for considerably more than it is worth—which with any luck may turn out in one or both cases to be the mark of a director going places.

* * *

IS IT AN UNWORTHY, FAN-MAGAZINEY CURIOSITY WHICH MAKES me want to know which of his own films a director likes best? Probably, but I can never resist finding out, and in fact one sometimes gets some very peculiar answers indeed. Vincente Minnelli, though, on the whole likes the films one would have him like: he is very fond of *Gigi*, *Meet Me in St. Louis* ("of course"), *The Pirate*, *The Band Wagon*; he has happy memories of *The Bad and the Beautiful*, and was pleased when I talked enthusiastically about *The Cobweb*. He also holds *Lust for Life* in particular affection, though as far as I could make out more for the battle he had to make it than for the film as made, since when the chance finally came he was rushed into it with the script not properly prepared and had to start right off with the suicide, as a field of corn had been specially preserved through harvest and would not wait. As for films he didn't like, well, there was *Kismet*, and perhaps one or two others, but nothing he absolutely detested.

All of which is quite comforting for British critics, since this corresponds fairly closely with what they always liked about Minnelli. But how did he feel about the ideas of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* writers on his work? He was diplomatic: "Well, I met them a long time ago, before they had all started directing their own films, and we became great friends. I was flattered, of course, by the detail in which they had studied my films—they really knew them almost shot by shot—though naturally they didn't always see them quite the way I did. But then, a director isn't necessarily the best judge of his own work . . ."

How, then, did he feel about the *Cahiers* review of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*? He hadn't seen it, and when I told him that Jean Douchet regarded it as a sort of artistic

testament, at once summarising and surpassing all his previous work, a look of horrified incredulity came over his face. "Why no, I didn't see it in that light at all. There were a lot of difficulties . . . We had to rush into production, the script wasn't even finished, there were casting problems, and I didn't have anything like enough time to prepare. Anyway I wanted to keep the story in the First World War, since it doesn't really make sense except in that context. There are things I like about the film, particularly in the scenes where I was able to re-create very closely the look of the 1940's in wartime Paris, but even that varies from sequence to sequence because everything had to be rushed. Now *Two Weeks in Another Town*, on the other hand, where I could choose my own cast . . ."

While I had Minnelli trapped, I could not lose the opportunity to sort out some minor mysteries in his career. I knew that he had taken on *I Dood It* only after all the numbers except the "Jericho" ballet had been shot, but reports had also appeared here and there of other sequences shot and then cut from *Ziegfeld Follies*. Could he throw any light on this? "Yes, there were two or three other sequences cut for reasons of length. I don't remember much about them, as none of them was directed by me—oh yes, there was a very good one of Lena Horne singing 'Liza', directed I think by George Sidney. He also, incidentally, directed the opening number everyone attributes to me; you know, 'Bring on the Beautiful Girls', with Lucille Ball and the dancers dressed as cats."

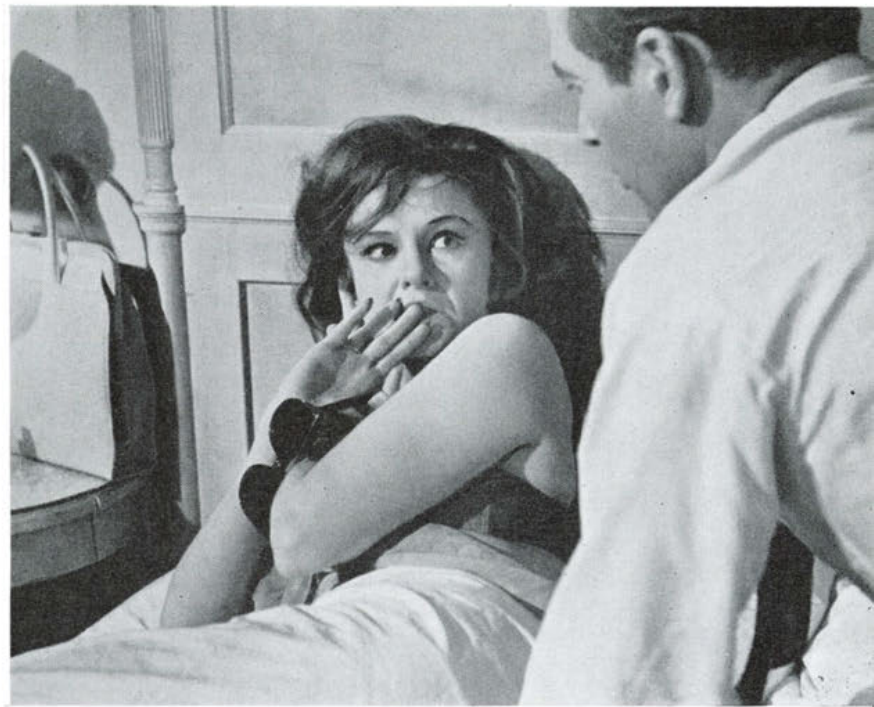
How about the other film partially directed by Minnelli, *The Seventh Sin*? I recalled one or two scenes like that in Eleanor Parker's bedroom near the beginning, with the camera lovingly exploring dressing-table and wardrobe, which I felt sure must be by Minnelli. "You know, I just don't remember; I think it's a neurotic desire not to remember. The whole film was a nightmare. Ronald Neame was taken ill, producers kept changing, most of the cast were unhappy and there never was a final script. I know I did quite a bit near the beginning and a lot towards the end, but really there are little bits all over the place, odd establishing shots, inserted close-ups and so on. Françoise Rosay was wonderful" [she told me a little while ago, incidentally, that Minnelli directed all her scenes, which is some guide] "and George Sanders was a tower of strength. He'd made hundreds of films, most of them bad, and he didn't care what happened; he just turned up on time, blandly did what he was told without turning a hair, and went home. I don't think it would have made any difference to him if there'd been a new director every day."

So that was all the Minnelli mysteries sorted out. Or was it? A few days later I read in *Films in Review* that he directed the Judy Garland sequences in *Till the Clouds Roll By*. True or false? I suppose I'll just have to wait till the next time he's in Europe to find out.

* * *

JOHN HOUSEMAN HAS CALLED GERALDINE PAGE "HOLLYWOOD'S top dramatic actress for the next ten years." As long ago as 1953 she made a Hollywood film, *Hondo* (a *Shane*-type story directed by John Farrow with help from Ford), and was busily written up as "a second Grace Kelly" with a sexy sizzle under a cool exterior; but no one remembers now, and despite an Oscar nomination she headed back to the New York stage. Eight years and a variety of award-winning performances on and off Broadway later, she was brought out again to Hollywood by Hal Wallis, importer of Shirley Booth and Magnani and something of a specialist in prestige actresses, to re-create one of her stage parts, Alma in *Summer and Smoke*. From there it was almost inevitable that she should move over to M-G-M to re-create another, Alexandra del Lago in a later Tennessee Williams play, *Sweet Bird of Youth*. For *Summer and Smoke* she got a second Oscar nomination, and who knows, for *Sweet Bird of Youth* she might even get an Oscar.

A "Four Horsemen" location: Minnelli, Glenn Ford and Ingrid Thulin at Versailles.



"Wildly miscast but still splendid": Geraldine Page in "*Sweet Bird of Youth*".

Obviously, she will sooner or later, because she is that sort of star.

Personally, it seems, she is quiet and quite unnoticeable—rather puddingy, someone said unkindly. On the screen, however, she is anything but. Vaguely Method in her approach to acting (who isn't, these days?) she throws herself passionately into her roles and manages some dazzling transformations. This has been particularly appreciated in Britain because the two Tennessee Williams films opened almost at the same time and everyone, inevitably, said that it was fantastic and you could hardly believe it was the same actress in both.

They were quite right, of course: you couldn't. In *Summer and Smoke* she was more type-cast by Hollywood standards. Playing a quiet, repressed spinster of, I suppose, about her own age (which is 37) awakened too late for her own good to the pleasures of the body, she gave a beautifully exact and restrained performance in a beautifully exact and restrained film. (Several critics seized the opportunity to say that it was stagey, secure in the knowledge that it was an adaptation of a play with a stage star and a stage director, Peter Glenville,



but I can't say I thought so, and wonder if anyone else would have without prior information.) This, one supposes, was relatively easy. But in *Sweet Bird of Youth* she was, by any external standards one likes to apply, wildly miscast, and yet she was still splendid. Though, typically in Richard Brooks' vacillating adaptation, anything positively suggesting this was removed, the whole tenor of the thing seems to imply that Alexandra del Lago must be a silent star, or nearly; and obviously a *monstre sacré*, a Crawford or a Swanson, was called for. Geraldine Page must be about fifteen or twenty years too young; and whenever she is meant to look particularly old and unattractive she succeeds in looking quite dazzlingly glamorous, but somehow it doesn't matter. Not only is she, against our better judgment, completely believable but, more important, as long as she is on the screen it is impossible to look at anyone else.

What will she do next, apart from *Toys in the Attic*? There isn't much Williams left except *Period of Adjustment* and *The Night of the Iguana*, but William Inge must still have a few items up his sleeve—how about the good-natured, delinquent actress of *A Loss of Roses* for a start? Anyway, when one considers that—for instance—she could have played, better, any of half-a-dozen roles given to Sophia Loren in the last few years and is no doubt equally capable, should the idea appeal to her, of taking the bread out of Spring Byington's mouth as well, she shouldn't have too much trouble. But most likely it will be more Broadway and a film every now and then when it suits her. This will impress Hollywood no end, and be New York's gain, but it will certainly be our loss.

* * *

A CONSTANT READER OF *Cinéma*, I find all sorts of odd and interesting information tucked away among the interminable details of B.B. and Johnny Hallyday. One piece that is perhaps worth passing on, as I haven't seen it elsewhere, concerns *Suspicion*, and emerged in an *entretien* with Hitchcock. Apparently as originally planned Cary Grant turns out to be a murderer after all, and is, as Joan Fontaine suspects, trying to poison her. When he brings in the drink which is to administer the *coup de grâce* she is writing to her mother, the burden of her letter being more or less "Now I am sure that he wants to kill me, but it makes no difference: I still love him, and will let him do what he wants with me . . ." She drinks the proffered cup and then asks him if he could possibly walk down to the postbox to post her letter. Glad of an excuse to leave the house while the poison takes effect, he does so, and the last shot of the film shows him unthinkingly posting the letter which carries his death-warrant and walking off whistling into the dusk. Much more typical of Hitchcock, and how it would have set Cary Grant admirers by the ears in 1941! Too bad the stud-o stepped in and spoiled Hitch's little joke.

ARKADIN



FILM REVIEWS

JULES ET JIM

JULES ET JIM (Gala) is very much a conscious attempt on Truffaut's part to make a synthesis of his first two films: to combine the "big" subject with obvious human significance of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* with what he calls the "plastic enterprise" of *Shoot the Pianist*. And he has succeeded partly, perhaps, because the novel by Henri-Pierre Roché (best known as "the man who introduced Gertrude Stein to Picasso") from which the film is adapted was already in itself both a "plastic enterprise" and a strikingly honest study of human relationships.

In the Paris of 1910, two young writers, one with a French passport, the other with a German one, but both inhabitants of that pre-1914 Bohemia nourished by letters of credit, meet and become friends for life. Jim, the Frenchman, is tall and successful with women; Jules is neither. Into their lives steps Catherine (Jeanne Moreau). Both are taken with her, but it is Jules she marries. Jealousy scarcely enters into these relationships, for Catherine is a "new woman", more a pal than a girl-friend—"Jim always thought of Catherine as *un vrai Jules*"—and Jules is also slang for a he-man. Like the Scandinavian heroines she admires, Catherine is a force of nature, a cataclysm. On the eve of her marriage, she avenges an imagined slight from Jules' family—and his failure to back her up—by sleeping with one of her ex-lovers. Like most people who are basically and irredeemably unhappy, she feels that it doesn't really matter if she hurts other people—they are still better off than she is. And when, after the Armistice, Jim comes to Germany to stay with Jules and Catherine, he finds Jules resigned to Catherine's periodic bolting. Rather than lose her, he even pushes Jim into her arms: she'll still be *ours* that way, he says. But Jim proves too difficult for Catherine to master; and the precarious balance of love and friendship is finally and tragically upset by Catherine, who wins the ultimate victory over Jules and Jim.

Friendship, Truffaut seems to be saying, is rarer and more precious than love. Or perhaps he is also saying that friendship, not being as natural or as innate as sex relationships, must always be destroyed by the forces of nature re-asserting themselves—just as in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, to which several references are made in the film, the wilderness is always waiting to destroy the carefully nurtured garden.

Shoot the Pianist moved back and forth between comedy and tragedy with intoxicating brio. In *Jules et Jim* both elements are constantly present, one within the other, as in a chemical suspension. Although the film begins gaily enough, one soon realizes that, under the gaiety, tragedy is already present. And even at the end, terrifying though it is, one feels that life is nevertheless re-asserting itself. This precarious balance, this refusal of the genres, is of course very reminiscent of Jean Renoir; and indeed Renoir's influence can be felt throughout the film, in its treatment of character, direction of actors, and feeling for landscape. Jules never seems either contemptible or ridiculous, as he so easily might have been. In fact, all of the characters are sympathetic—even Jim, even Catherine. As in *La Règle du Jeu*, everyone is in the right, everyone has his reasons. Although Truffaut is in complete control of the situation, the actors are allowed a life of their own, and this freedom to breathe, to exist totally, is what makes them such thoroughly rounded characters, enabling one to sympathise with them. Nor are Oskar Werner (whom Truffaut first noticed as the Bavarian student in *Lola Montès*) and Henri Serre (a young avant-garde theatre actor), who play Jules and Jim respectively, ever crushed by the immense authority of Jeanne Moreau. Catherine is a very difficult role to bring off, but she achieves extremely effective simplicity without sacrificing any of

Jeanne Moreau in "Jules et Jim".



"A Kind of Loving": Alan Bates and June Ritchie.

her brilliance and technique. Just as Renoir always seemed able not only to get a good performance from his actors, but also to let them express themselves as fully as possible, here we have Jeanne Moreau giving a total representation of her possibilities.

As in Renoir, too, music plays a large part in *Jules et Jim* (and there is even a song for Jeanne Moreau), as does an economically successful evocation of period and place: pre-World War One Paris, the Riviera before the tourists got hold of it, and the deliquescent landscapes of the Rhine valley. The greatest tribute to Truffaut's period sense is that there is never any jarring when he occasionally cuts in actual newsreels of the time. For the war episodes he has distorted ordinary film to CinemaScope width, with shell bursts spreading right across the screen; when he goes back to Paris, it is always with a newsreel shot that communicates a sense of motion—a train, a bus, the M^{tro}.

What belongs undeniably and unmistakably to Truffaut is the film's sense of movement. Just as the story sweeps along from 1910 to 1933, so Truffaut's camera pans, swoops, dives, irises in and out, tracks and turns on itself in great full circles. Cuts and jump-cuts follow on each other with breathless speed and elegance. But whenever it is necessary, Truffaut never hesitates to slow his camera down, to slide in and hold the characters in close-up for important dialogue scenes. And then, smoothly, the movement starts up again: aerial shots scoop down and we soar away. In short, his technique (and Coutard's photography) is even more brilliant than in *Shoot the Pianist*; and as someone pointed out the other day, technique, after all, comes from the Greek word for art—*techné*. There will be those who will regret the simplicity of *Les Quatre Cents Coups*; and there will be those (myself included) who still have a sneaking nostalgia for the anarchy of *Shoot the Pianist*. But no one, I think, will have any more doubts about Truffaut's stature: he is right up there with the great directors (make your own list) of our time.

RICHARD ROUD

A KIND OF LOVING

THE MERITS OF *A Kind of Loving* (Anglo Amalgamated) are very much those one might expect from a Keith Waterhouse/Willis Hall script: a salty sense of humour, a sharp ear for dialogue, and an adaptation of Stan Barstow's novel which puts over its central problem with as little bluff or charm as possible, keeping in unusually sharp focus what the film is about.

This problem is an important and complex one and, as far as I was concerned, was handled here with an almost Marxist subtlety of dialectic. It starts with a question—how can one be human in a society whose values are inhuman?—and then breaks down this question into a number of apparent contradictions. How the natural, for instance, becomes destructive when it takes on the form of eroticism; or how civic virtues stultify when they take on the form of gentility. These contradictions are worked out concretely, through class differences, in a present-day industrial town: Burnley. On one side we have the working class with its half-lost sense of community, and on the other the *petit bourgeois*, ambitious and petty, borrowing its ideas from the television set. In between these two groups steer a new and deracinated class of young people seeking some sort of identity. They are the product of different pressures from members of the working class, and so are unable to realise themselves within its ethos. At the same time, not surprisingly, they have no wish to associate themselves with lower middle class gentility. Their predicament is a difficult one to resolve, as the case of the two lovers in *A Kind of Loving* so clearly demonstrates.

Ingrid and Victor—the names are doubly ironic, since in the final scene this typist and draughtsman *do* become heroic—are passionately involved with each other. Yet they, unlike the lovers in a more stratified society, lack both the vocabulary and the conventions by which to make sense of this attraction. Does it consist of lust alone, or does it contain, perhaps, an element of love? Is she merely trying

to hook him into marriage, or is he merely using her for his pleasure? In the early stages of their relationship these questions are fairly unimportant, for Victor and Ingrid are unable to break away from each other, even when they seriously try. It is only after they have had sex that the situation becomes urgent enough to require some sort of answer—when she becomes pregnant and he, thoughtlessly conventional, offers to marry her. Then, after a dismal wedding, they go to live in her mother's house, and at last are forced to see how they are well and truly caught. This mother (superbly played by Thora Hird) is the final distillation of gentility; and under her awful aegis the two lovers, cramped and oppressed, turn against each other. After a violent quarrel with the old witch, Victor leaves his wife and, defeated, returns to his family. But they refuse to let him admit failure, pressing him to take the girl from her mother's house. This he does; and so the film ends on a note of reconciliation. In realising their responsibility towards each other, Victor and Ingrid arrive, perhaps, at "a kind of loving".

Such a plot, of course, involves an analysis of sentiments. We need to be shown how class conditions feelings, how the lovers have to move through various stages of self-deception before they can possibly arrive at an authentic relationship. What is so interesting about *A Kind of Loving* is that its director, John Schlesinger, has used a documentary style to suggest these inner conflicts. In a world of cold surfaces, where the inhabitants are as insect-like as the creatures in a Lowry painting, Schlesinger establishes the bewilderment of his lovers through the ambiguity of their motives. Are their actions governed by love or by the need for acquisition? They are themselves unable to give a clear answer, and so the question is left open and the audience enters into their own uncertainties.

Of course this documentary style is as awkward as gunpowder: the mildest implausibility is liable to blow the film sky-high. Yet June Ritchie and Alan Bates, who play the lovers, carry this dangerous burden with an almost breathtaking nonchalance, and perform with a range of gesture, genuine and unexpected, which is not usually found outside the documentary.

The result is a curious objectivity. We see it in Denys Coop's able camerawork, which, by its deliberation, holds us back from the characters so that people are seen almost as things—leadens, weighted with texture. Rather than let us identify ourselves with these characters—which would allow us to become partisan and so, possibly, find a glib solution to the film's problem—it restrains us, makes us think again. It is not enough for us to see the action through Victor's eyes, when Ingrid appears indeed like a scheming monster. Nor is it enough to see it through her eyes, when we realise how a woman in love is still unemancipated, the man always having the first move. Somehow we are forced to fuse these two points of view: and this, in effect, is the achievement of *A Kind of Loving*. It presents us with a complex situation and then compels us to face it squarely.

ERIC RHODE

ALL FALL DOWN

ALL FALL DOWN (M-G-M) is not at all bad considering; indeed, come to think of it, it is not at all bad at all. I don't quite know why one should be surprised at this. The film was written by William Inge, which *Splendour in the Grass* has shown us is not always an advantage, but is not—witness *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*—always a disadvantage either. It was directed by John Frankenheimer, known to us up to now by two films, one (*The Young Stranger*) excellent and the other (*The Young Savages*) disappointing. It was produced by John Houseman, which is usually an encouraging sign. So why the doubts? Perhaps because in cold print it all sounds too close for comfort to the sort of picture Delmer Daves "creates" twice yearly: Dorothy McGuire as highly-strung, possessive mother; Arthur Kennedy as father, drinking grumpily in the basement; Troy Donahue as rough, rangy, all-conquering young savage hero; Angie Dickinson perhaps as the slightly older girl he gets involved with.

But fortunately this is where the difference begins. The parents are played instead by Angela Lansbury (consolidating her reputation as the best thing the British Labour movement has yet produced) and Karl Malden, and for once they are totally believable in relation to each other and to their children, rounded, living characters who often achieve the rare quality of being able to surprise us without forfeiting our belief. And the fine young cannibal son, played

by Warren Beatty with great physical panache but little noticeable intelligence, is not this time the romantic hero whose excesses we can vicariously enjoy at the cost of a perfunctory last minute sobering up. He starts that way, trailing clouds of rather disreputable glory, the idol of his family and adoring younger brother, but little by little it is all stripped from him, until in the end he is shown up for what he is, weak, shoddy, and finally just pathetic.

In fact, looking back from the conclusion, one discovers with a start that we have been lulled by the trappings of a Hollywood novelette into accepting without question a very neat demolition of the whole code of values upon which such novelettes are based. The major romantic image of the last few years, the rebel without a cause, has been brusquely deglamorised, and we hardly realise what has happened until it is Brandon de Wilde who walks out into that symbolic dawn and Warren Beatty, "the most exciting American male in movies," who is left shattered and alone.

For achieving this minor revolution with the minimum of blood, sweat and tears, Inge and Frankenheimer seem to be responsible in about equal parts. Inge, working from a novel which must either have been pretty thoroughly submerged or have conformed closely to his world-view in the first place, is on home territory with the superficially ordinary, basically decidedly odd Mid-Western family: the breakfast-table discussions, the interminable gossipy telephone conversations, the parental naggings and awkwardnesses where grown-up children are concerned, all ring sinisterly true.

But from there on it is Frankenheimer's film. Despite occasional flashes of acute realistic observation (the tatty waterfront strip-joint, for instance), it is his declaration of independence from a simple, naturalistic television style in much the same way that *Stage Struck* was Lumet's and *The Rat Race* Mulligan's. He has not, admittedly, blossomed into full colour as yet, but he affects a subtle, intricate visual style which, if it did not come off, one would call arty: enormous close-ups, à la Stevens, extravagant soft-focus (swans and all) for the lakeside love scene, bizarre symbolic locations (the endless causeway back to land near the opening, the apple-orchard in the midst of which the climax takes place), and so on. It is all very patently calculated, but luckily the calculation is exact; if this is not the only way to deal with the screenplay, it is probably the best. Bravura technical displays of this sort tend to be labelled old-fashioned; in *All Fall Down*, by using them to produce something very like a critical parody, Frankenheimer manages to make a whole type of film subject seem old-fashioned instead.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

CHRONIQUE D'UN ETE

"ARE YOU HAPPY?" This question—with which *Chronique d'un Eté* (Contemporary) opens and closes, and round which the whole film is constructed—is disconcerting enough at the best of times; but when the answer involves baring the soul to its most private depths, one is liable to get more than one bargained for. There is a lacerating scene in the film where Marilou (there are no actors, just people), confronted by this question, suddenly discovers



"All Fall Down": Warren Beatty and Eva Marie Saint.

in herself an agonising fear of solitude; her face, held in an inexorable close-up, reveals an unhappiness, a sense of despair that is almost unbearable to watch, so intense that neither she, nor the interviewer can break the ensuing silence. Such a scene, using real people rather than actors, should, one feels, be an unwarrantable prying into private grief, like a gutter press actuality photograph. In fact, it shades ultimately into that released exhilaration which is the result of a shared artistic experience.

Crudely and inadequately put, the idea with which Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin started in this film was to take a camera, a couple of people, throw them a bone of contention, and see what happens. Often, obviously, nothing will happen (22 hours of film were shot, from which the present 90 minutes were edited). But the camera acts as an initial stimulus, a focal point to sharpen awareness of oneself and of others; and the camera once forgotten, a gesture, a phrase, a moment of contact may emerge which will be the justification of "Cinéma-vérité", when spontaneity throws up something from reality which is more true than . . . than what? There lies the question.

Paradoxically, the method works best when it comes closest to fictional cinema. In his earlier film, *Pyramide Humaine*, Rouch used much the same technique, throwing together two groups of pupils from an African school—one white and one coloured—who did not mix outside school hours. Out of the contact a warm relationship developed, which Rouch focused in the second half of the film by using a fictional story in which one of the students is drowned. The improvised reactions of the students to the fiction suddenly threw into relief not only the precarious balance of their new relationship, but also its deep value. In *Chronique d'un Été*, Rouch and Morin, again working along interview lines with a hand camera and simultaneously recorded sound, have abandoned the idea of a fictional narrative to concentrate on actuality.

The film opens with Rouch and Morin explaining their idea to Marceline, starting the ball rolling by sending her out into the Paris streets to ask "Are you happy?" Gradually, other characters are introduced: a young couple talk about their work, the housing problem; a worker at the Renault factory is observed at work and at home; discussions arise on the colour bar, the Congo situation, the Algerian war; scenes illustrate the importance of holidays, the holidays themselves, the return to Paris after the summer. Sharp, human, revealing, most of the film runs along fascinating but conventional documentary lines, occasionally sparking into extraordinary moments (*cinéma-vérité's* goal) like the scene where Angelo (the Renault worker) meets Landry (the coloured student) for the first time, and before the camera a friendship germinates.

The two most successful sequences, however, are those which, if one were not aware of their origin, might well have been lifted from a fictional film. 1) The sequence already mentioned with Marilou, and its even more astonishing sequel, a second interview a few weeks later. Here she has fallen in love, and the camera finds her face a battlefield where a haltingly radiant smile fights to dominate the fear that her happiness may give way once again to the anguish of solitude. 2) The Marceline scenes. During a general conversation Rouch asks Landry if he knows what the tattooed number on Marceline's arm means. Various suggestions ("Coquetterie", "telephone number") are made before Marceline explains that she was deported as a Jewess during the Occupation. Silence; cut to Marceline walking alone in almost deserted streets, while her stumbling, deeply moving monologue recalls her experience.

The point about these scenes, filmed and recorded as they occurred, is that although their painful accuracy comes from their actuality as experience, they are *directed*—the *mise en scène* is as rigorous and as probing as anything in *Hiroshima, mon Amour*. The two Marilou sequences are simple enough, filmed in close-up, but their effect is defined by placing their raw anguish and joy on either side of the Marceline sequences with their calm acceptance of misery. The Marceline sequences are both complex and dramatically exact. Coming as it does on top of a light-hearted discussion, Rouch's question about the tattoo is loaded, and the joking answers dramatise Marceline's explanation. As she talks, the camera cuts to Landry, suddenly sober; briefly catches Nadine, whose hand hides her face, stifling her tears; and ends on a close-up of Marceline's hands playing with a rose. Cut instantly into the long, beautifully controlled travelling shots of Marceline, alone in the darkening empty streets, a perfect setting and image for the grey, meandering isolation of her memories.

Both these sequences, intensely real, are also intensely cinematic. The question arises whether any actress could have played Marilou so perfectly as Marilou, who *is* Marilou; but Marceline, on the other hand, just as "real" as Marilou, claimed later that throughout the filming she was acting, and that while everything she did was



"Chronique d'un Été": the second Marilou sequence.

true, the image projected is not really herself, but an actress portraying herself. Here one recalls the scene when the camera flashes briefly on Nadine, deeply moved by Marceline's story, trying to stifle her tears. The effect is dramatically simple but staggeringly effective, and one suddenly realises that what one has caught is the image of a woman desperately trying *not* to let it be seen that she is crying, rather than an actress working desperately to let us see that she was crying, but trying not to.

Chronique d'un Été is a fascinating experience, but one which leaves words like truth and reality open for definition. How True is Art? (or, alternatively, how Art is True?).

TOM MILNE

CLEO DE 5 A 7

AGNES VARDA CAME UP the hard way. Starting as official photographer for the Théâtre National Populaire, she somehow managed to finance a featurette in 1955, *La Pointe Courte*, a co-operative production and one of the true ancestors of the *nouvelle vague*. The film, I thought, had all the faults of her set—an over-addiction to Giraudoux, accompanied by a compulsive need to inject her social preoccupations. Then came the shorts—*Du Côté de la Côte*, *O Saisons*, *O Châteaux*, and *Opéra Mouffe*, Brussels prizewinner. And now, free from almost all traces of preciousness à la Giraudoux, *Cléo* (Sebricon).

"A bracelet of bright hair about the bone": Cléo is a young singer who is suddenly faced with the possibility of death. In spite of her beauty, her talent, her lover, and her friends, she finds herself alone and defenceless. The film follows her from five o'clock on the longest day of the year to half-past six; from her anguished visit to a fortune-teller, to the hospital where she is to learn the results of a medical analysis. Follows her step by step: nothing is omitted, there are no ellipses. The film is at once documentary and subjective. The streets and cafés of Paris, the taxis and cinemas, are seen both as they really are, and also as they appear to the eyes of a woman who is tracked by death. But the real subject of the film is loneliness, not death, although it's on a second viewing that this becomes clearer, when one gets away from one's own pre-conceived responses and from the highly subjective reactions that such a theme is bound to evoke. Even more frightening than the thought of death is the wall it creates between Cléo and her friends. She can't even bring herself to talk about it to her lover, for she realises it would only put him out, and with this comes the realisation that they are not in love. Her best friend, Dorothy, reacts to the news with cries of "C'est affreux!" and vague reassurances, and then goes off to her boyfriend with the parting shot of "Let's keep in touch."

Agnès Varda has beautifully succeeded in striking a balance between the frivolity of Cléo's little group and the outside world—the streets of Paris, its shops and parks. And it is from this outside world that help finally comes to her. A chance meeting in the Parc Montsouris with a young soldier on his last day of leave from Algeria brings, not love, perhaps, but at least a kind of human contact, a kind of understanding which can only come from strangers. They may fall in love, and Cléo's cancer may be curable; but in any case by the end of the film Cléo has achieved a deeper understanding of what life is and of what human relationships can be. She has, in a sense, been converted to—life.

The most important problem in making such a film was to render the visible world in all its beauty, thus increasing the poignancy of the idea of death, without falling into the trap of aestheticism. Largely shot in the street like a documentary, *Cléo* shines with some fantastically beautiful images—the long bus ride with the soldier, the shop-windows with their disturbing reflections, the elegiac sadness of the park in the late afternoon light: *et ego in Arcadia sum*. But Cléo is by no means just a "photographer's film". Corinne Marchand (Cléo) and Antoine Bourseiller (the soldier) are not, I dare say, great actors, but in *Cléo* they give great performances: which is perhaps the same thing as saying that I think, as might already have been guessed, that Agnès Varda has made a sensational debut, and that we may expect even greater things from her.

RICHARD ROUD

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE and GUNS IN THE AFTERNOON

WHEN HOLLYWOOD WENT "adult" a few years ago, its Westerns followed suit. Most of the major horse operas since *Shane* have been studiously sophisticated (the Freudian *One Eyed Jacks*, Wyler's anti-Western, *The Big Country*), thematically "different" (*The Searchers*, *The Unforgiven*), or heavily comic (*North to Alaska*, *The Comancheros*, and the immensely likeable *Rio Bravo*). Even Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven*, with its international cast of heroes, was hardly a conventional Western. It began to look as if the solitary folk hero, the lone gunslinger, had disappeared with Alan Ladd as he rode off into those faraway hills.

Now two new films have appeared which, if they do not resuscitate the really traditional Western, may serve as fitting epitaphs to it. Each employs two familiar cowboy stars in what may be their definitive roles. And both are so consciously old-fashioned and nostalgic that, appearing in 1962, they seem almost esoteric.

John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Paramount) is a simple, ironic story. A green Eastern lawyer (James Stewart) shows up in a Western town terrorised by an unregenerate thug, Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin). The idealistic Easterner wants, of course, to clean out the gunmen and cattle barons and make the town a decent place to live. He goes about trying to accomplish this—pretty ineffectually—in the great American Way (establishment of an effective constabulary, elections, etc.). The town's other ranking strong man (John Wayne) watches Stewart's quixotic activity with laconic amusement, then proceeds to get the job done himself by the simple process of shooting Liberty down. Because Liberty's violent demise had taken place during a showdown with Stewart, the townspeople—Stewart included—think he was responsible; and on this bogus fame he is elected to Congress and launched on a successful political career. Wayne fades into obscurity and dies, years later, alone and unlamented, save for some posthumous sentimentality by Stewart, Woody Strode and a few others.

Ford hangs a lot of millstones on to this simple and effective tale. There is a needless flashback and a long anti-climax (enlivened, however, by John Carradine's bit as a golden-throated orator. In his growing anecdote, he permits several of the players—especially Edmund O'Brien and Andy Devine—to chew the scenery to tatters. But, despite its excesses and whimsicalities, this is the best Ford we have had in years. Most of its effectiveness and its charm lie in the achievement of what can only be called consummate familiarity. The B-Western costumes, the simplicity of movement and composition of William Clothier's black-and-white photography, the thoroughgoing brutality of Lee Marvin's villain, all contribute to make *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* look like the Western. As for the principals, Stewart—skinny, stammering, sincere and befuddled—is the Jimmy Stewart; Wayne—taciturn, good-natured,

tough and supremely confident—is the John Wayne. It is obviously a movie Ford loved making. It is perhaps the John Ford as well.

From a more unlikely source comes an almost perfectly realised little film called *Guns in the Afternoon* (M-G-M), directed by Sam Peckinpah and starring Joel McCrea and Randolph Scott. Sentimental moviegoers out to see these old boys back in the saddle for perhaps the last time are going to get quite a lot more than they bargained for: a movie full of intelligence, quiet charm, and thorough understanding of its materials.

Scott and McCrea are not out here to tame the West. The West—most of it—is not only tamed, but dull and heedless of its past. The two ex-lawmen are tough but creaking vestiges of the old days, virtually useless in a territory which no longer needs their simple talents. At the beginning of the film Scott is appearing as a side-show attraction, decked out in a shabby Buffalo Bill outfit; McCrea is entering town to take a job as a bank guard—the final humiliation in a series of increasingly tame jobs. The plot is negligible: Scott (enacting the image of the good bad man) teams up with his old sidekick McCrea to transport some gold from a mining camp into town. He betrays his partner but, when the latter is in peril, comes to his rescue.

What is so attractive about the film is not simply the nostalgia of seeing these two weathered and graceful old men on the screen again. It is the intelligent way in which the direction and dialogue handle and exploit this nostalgia, developing it into a touching and significant tribute to the best elements of the Western myth. Such sections as the reminiscent dialogues between the two men, or Scott charging full-tilt to the rescue of his friend, or McCrea's quietly noble death scene, are treated with unembarrassed affection.

With this film Peckinpah displays not mere competence, but imagination and promise. Under his direction, Scott and McCrea play with extraordinary ease and charm; his heavies—simultaneously funny and menacing—achieve the chilly balance which Ford tries for and often misses. The sequence in the mining camp is not only lively and exciting, but staged with amazing realism. And certain individual touches are magnificent: a moronic gunman, frustrated at missing his human quarry, begins firing in wild fury at a flock of chickens.

DUPRE JONES

In Brief

LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES 1960 (*Gala*). Choderlos de Laclos' novel is one of the comparatively few books which really succeed in imposing their conviction of human wickedness. This not only because of the cool, relentless intelligence with which Laclos deploys his material, but because, having dealt villainy all the cards, he involves the reader wilyly in such a fine appreciation of the way the hand is played. Sympathise as we may with the luckless Présidente de Tourvel, it is with Valmont and Mme. de Merteuil that we are engaged. The book, in fact, genuinely shocks; and the film, which caused such a commotion in France a couple of years ago, seems by comparison so puny and innocuous that one can only suppose some whiff of the old brimstone still hangs around the title.

In detail, Roger Vadim and Roger Vailland's smartly updated adaptation yields some clever touches, including the enrolment of Valmont in the Diplomatic Corps. Laclos, one feels, would certainly not have disowned the scene of dazzling effrontery in which Mme. de Merteuil (here Mme. Valmont) breaks Valmont's liaison with the Présidente by telegram. But, in working so hard at modishness, the film reduces the scale of everyone concerned. The Présidente should be a citadel worthy of Valmont's siege guns; and Annette Vadim, playing rather in the manner of a chastened Bardot, merits only a popgun attack. Reduce her status, and the villains themselves become merely a pair of connivers: the great seduction scene, by consequence, can only be played—as it very amusingly is here—as a piece of comedy. When the film swings back to the original in dealing out the final retribution—madness for Mme. de Tourvel, death for Valmont, disfigurement for his wife—the punishments seem out of proportion. Much more easily can one imagine the unholy pair corrupting the glass-encased innocence of the United Nations.

All the same, the rich vulgarity of the director's methods suits the cocky, chic tone of the adaptation. Diplomatic parties, skiing at Mégève, jazz by Thelonius Monk, seduction with the aid of a tape-recorder: these are Vadim's ingredients. His trump card, boldly played, is Jeanne Moreau, who manages to look unnervingly like Bette Davis while rightly enjoying every minute of her own machinations. Gérard Philipe backs her up with his unflinching, if

slightly weary, charm. When Vadim tries the beautiful effect—as in the famous shot in which Valmont and the Présidente recline against a snow-bank—one is mainly conscious of the amount of manoeuvring it takes to achieve it. But the camera moves fluently, and if the style can hardly be called penetrating it at least makes for a lively surface. Although *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, 1960, doesn't hold a candle to *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, 1782, perhaps we ought to be thankful that there isn't another Lacos around.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

TIGRESS OF BENGAL (*Gala*). A year or so ago, a story was going round Paris film circles about a conversation between Fritz Lang and one of his most fervent French admirers. This young man greeted Lang with the news that he was contemplating a book about him and that he was convinced *The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb* were Lang's greatest works. Lang was reported brusquely and unanswerably to have replied, "If you think that, then please don't write the book." British audiences are unlikely to see these two much discussed films *in toto*, for *Tigress of Bengal* is an incoherent amalgam of portions of both films, weighed down by childish American dialogue and out-of-synch dubbing. Yet enough remains to prove their unmistakable authorship. To find their origins we have to go back over forty years, to a scenario written by Lang and Thea von Harbou for the silent version directed by Joe May, for whom Lang was then working. And one has only to look at Lang's own *Die Spinnen* of 1919 (and, to a lesser extent, *Destiny* and *Kriemhild's Revenge*) to find the connection. Lang has always had an affection for schoolboy hokum, the super serial of adventure and intrigue set in some never-never land of the imagination, and the two Indian films belong defiantly to this enjoyable if outdated tradition.

The pleasure to be derived from the films does not lie in the story—they are films for the eye, not the brain, and there's no need to be snooty about them on this account. The "mysterious *mise-en-scène*" so beloved by French critics becomes their justification. Shot partially on location in India, with studio work in Germany, they again display Lang's feeling for architectural values (this time in colour) and elaborately worked-out action sequences. Here are all the trappings of the adventure serial: mysterious palaces inhabited by evil princes and lovely dancers; corridors which lead nowhere; underground passages (some of them straight out of *Die Spinnen*) which lead only to the tiger pit or a secret prison for lepers. Through it all, Lang's camera tracks and prowls, always settling for the most revealing set-up and producing beautiful images from dappled sunlight, gleaming costumes and heavily decorated interiors. Even in this truncated version, his personality continually imposes itself through a characteristic camera movement, a grouping, or the way a scene is put together. Lang's return to Germany was probably a painful as well as a nostalgic experience. Yet there is something enjoyable in finding a director returning to the themes he first explored nearly half-a-century ago, and relishing their absurdities with a good deal of the old glee.

JOHN GILLET

THE NOTORIOUS LANDLADY (*Columbia*). Back to London, Eng., with the fog swirling thickly about the Mayfair squares, the quaint little would-be Dickensian pawnshop just around the corner from the U.S. Embassy, and the landlady (Kim Novak), opening the door with apron, smudged face and amateur Eliza Doolittle accent, lightly disguised as her own parlour-maid. The plot, such as it is, concerns the efforts of her tenant (Jack Lemmon, whose comedy technique gains in finesse with every film) to convince the police, his Embassy superior (a rather heavy Fred Astaire) and himself that she has not murdered her husband. The landlady's habits, which include playing the organ at midnight, in a heavily shadowed, candelabra-lit room, keeping cupboards mysteriously locked, and sneaking off to the pawnshop through the murk, make the job no easier. Richard Quine, whose comedies generally have some precision, here seems uncertain as to whether he's aiming at black humour (in which case the level attained is not much more than pale grey) or the more straightforward comedy-thriller. A bow to *Psycho*—the pointed shot of water draining out of a bath can have, presumably, no other purpose—suggests the former; and there is a gently macabre finale, involving the identification of a single bath-chair at a Gilbert and Sullivan concert where the entire audience is composed of the chair-ridden. But the film varies its tone almost from scene to scene, and could stand a good deal of trimming to pull its better jokes into sharp focus. A comedy of odds and ends, in fact, sustained by some pleasant ideas and by Jack Lemmon's impeccable timing of the casual effect.

PENELOPE HOUSTON



"The Notorious Landlady": Kim Novak and Jack Lemmon locate the missing witness, Estelle Winwood.

THE MUSIC MAN (*Warners*). Ten years ago an ex-actor from Philadelphia called Tekoskey had his first Broadway success with a musical production, *Plain and Fancy*. He went on to stage three more hits in a row and to translate one of them (*Auntie Mame*) into a cheerful, theatrical movie. In his second film, a version of his own stage production of *The Music Man*, Morton DaCosta, as he is now known, again shows that he can bring off an effective stage-screen alliance.

The Music Man is pure corn. But it is high-grade Iowa corn, as tall and succulent in its own way as the famous Oklahoma variety. The hero is a fast-talking travelling confidence man, who persuades the dour but simple people of River City, Iowa, to buy his instruments and uniforms for a brass band which will keep the town boys out of trouble. Actually he does not know a note of music, but he expects to be well on his way before this interesting fact leaks out. The story of his redemption by the love of a lady librarian, and his eventual triumph, contains no surprises. What is astonishing is that as the dénouement draws nearer one finds oneself enthusiastically cheering for the bogus musician. The credit must go first to Meredith Willson, writer of the original book, music and lyrics, and himself an Iowa man who was a flautist with Sousa in the Twenties. He uses the popular tunes and folk humour of the period with an affectionate nostalgia, while DaCosta, steering closely by theatrical convention and never attempting realism, still gives the film plenty of pace. The start is laboured; but the climax builds to a tension which finds its due release in the clashing brass of the inevitable "Seventy-six Trombones".

But the film owes its punch essentially to the Music Man himself, a once-in-a-lifetime performance by Robert Preston, who played the part on Broadway. Not a natural singer or dancer, he has mastered the art of appearing to be both; and his handling of the rattle-brained, talking-to-music number "Trouble" is a brilliant piece of timing and inflexion, equalled in effect by the elaborate set-piece "Marian the Librarian". The supporting cast is augmented by Hermione Gingold, magnificently absurd as the mayor's wife, Paul Ford, as her husband, and Shirley Jones, as the singing librarian. But Preston's performance is a triumph of sheer professionalism: it is his film from start to finish, all two and a half hours of it.

BRENDA DAVIES



SUNFLOWERS

AND



COMMISSARS

ROBERT VAS

HAMLET: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

POLONIUS: By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

HAMLET: Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS: It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET: Or like a whale?

POLONIUS: Very like a whale.

HAMLET: . . . They fool me to the top of my bent . . .

A WELL-KNOWN DOCTRINE of Soviet Party history lays down that the greatest turning point of modern times came with the first shots from the cannons of the Battleship Aurora, firing on the Czarist Winter Palace. Accept this or not, the similar role of *Battleship Potemkin* in the history of modern cinema is unquestionable. Here the intellectual, personal language of the screen was born, with its contrasts, metaphors, symbols and rhythms, its physiognomy of objects and human faces. Roaring with enthusiasm, the crowd burst on to the screen, packed it with movement and asserted its right to become the protagonist. The language was urgent, contemporary, and yet universal: it had to be. It needed to penetrate deeper than Griffith had, in the four comparatively private stories of *Intolerance*, into the causes and effects of a social conflict. Find a new language: convey strength.

So when sound, the new invention, reached the Moscow and Leningrad studios, the Soviet cinema was in a sense caught in the trap of its own newly achieved classicism. The power of the image had given existence, justification and emphasis to the symbols—but would they be able to survive more complex artistic methods? Was sound in any case more complex? In Europe and America the change-over went relatively easily: "Mammy" was sung, the gangster's revolver shots heard, "M" delivered his delirious monologue. But in Russia there were other problems. How could a symbol speak without destroying its own "supernatural" self? Could Eisenstein have inflected, heightened, contrasted his shots as freely if those Czarist guns on the Odessa steps had actually been heard firing? Could a resounding "hurrah" substitute for the crushing power of images?

This was the basic problem at the outset of that famous Thirties period in Soviet cinema which we now know mainly from unrevised editions of old textbooks or from incomplete descriptions in new ones*. We are ready to take it for granted that it was a "classic" period (which it really was, in every sense), having seen only a fragment of its output. The image of the young Maxim Gorki overshadows that of Maxim, the amiable Petersburg workman; Chapayev's heroism outshines that of the Kronstadt sailors; *Ivan* and *Shchors* are just mysterious concepts floating around in books, along with the names of Kuleshov, Turin, Trauberg, Dzigan or Raizman. But behind these names are conscientious, loyal, even heroic artists, eager to find a language to express the new Soviet reality and often confronted with their own personal dramas. This was, proudly and by intention, a political cinema: it must be viewed within a political context. This article does not pretend to provide a historical survey. Rather, it will consider a few aspects of the period which the books leave undiscussed, and which come inevitably to mind on re-viewing this group of films.

* I feel that *Soviet Cinema*, by Thorold Dickinson and Catherine de la Roche (published in 1948), does an almost propagandist job glorifying the Soviet film scene; and even Jay Leyda's gap-filling *Kino* fails to sketch in the political and intellectual climate of the "witnessed years" with the stress and standpoint that is necessary for a real understanding of this period. *The Soviet Film Industry*, published for the Research Programme on the U.S.S.R. in America, is clearly overstressing the same points, but in an opposite direction.

Top: "the proud and peaceful sunflowers" of Dovzhenko's "Earth". Lower: the militant imagery of his "Shchors".

"Soviet reality" was the "general line" in those years of the first Five Year Plan. The object: to set aside the imaginative *montage* and, using the weapon of the word, to catch up with the rapid pulse of the country. At the beginning of the period Dziga-Vertov made a film characteristically titled *Enthusiasm, Symphony of the Don Basin*: by the end of it he had disappeared from the Soviet film scene. This was the period in which Stalinism began to strike root: in which the doubts of the Babels, Pasternaks, Bloks and Eisensteins overshadowed the cheaply bought certainty of the "Professor Polezhaiev". A period which moves from the proud and peaceful sunflowers of Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930) to the sunflowers brutally turned up by the explosions in the magnificent opening shots of his *Shchors* (1939). The epoch ends with the first rifle-shots of World War Two, as it had begun with a shot: the one with which Mayakovsky, the poet, killed himself in 1930 . . . The energetic, open-eyed Mayakovsky, who had proudly called himself the "Mouthpiece of the Central Committee . . ."

* * *

What the Central Committee expected of its nationalised film industry was the image of the New Man, the positive hero, gaining strength through his battles: the optimistic, moral, tough Bolshevik, the fragment as well as the heart of the Empire. And while the Atalante sailed peacefully towards an enchanting Paris, the Stagecoach was in flight from the Indians, Professor Rath crowed for Lola Lola and Mr. Deeds went to town, the Soviet artist set out to fulfil his patriotic duty—and to try to believe in it.

The approaches to the New Man were various: legendary heroes like Chapayev and Shchors gave way to psychological portraits, like that of Shakhov in Ermler's *The Great Citizen*; popular heroes like Maxim to sharp vignettes of a group of Kronstadt sailors. Their emergence, out of a disproportionate quantity of trash, was the result of the talent and honesty of a few resolute artists. From the fusion between Dovzhenko's folk talent, or the intellectual drive of an Ermler or an Eisenstein, and a progressive ideology, came much of durable value. And this at a time when the atmosphere was in general unsympathetic to artistic creation; a time, for instance, which produced no Soviet novel of lasting value.

The Party did not hesitate to group these individual achievements under the general heading of "Socialist Realism". This should be the name for a style; or, rather, for an approach created for, by and out of a socialist society: "it tackles realism in the light of socialist ideology; encourages individuality in expression." Everything that is constructive, and not merely art for art's sake, is permissible. But, however wide the horizons these enticing rules of the game may seem to open, they are at the same time fatally constricted. For, of course, the word constructive is interpreted by the Party. "Realism," wrote Vakhtangov, "takes living truth and gives back genuine feelings." But the rules for the current "living truth" are Party-determined; and how can we really admire a cloud if one day a resolution is passed that it resembles a camel, and next day it is officially declared that from now on it must be seen as a weasel? A submissive art can achieve only limited results. "The chicken is cooked," sings the anarchist Dymba in *The Vyborg Side*, "the chicken is stuffed, the chicken doesn't like this at all." The approach to realism may be basically the right one (man against an observed social background; the creation of prototypes; the use of them with propagandist force), but it is Western films such as an *Umberto D.* or a *Grapes of Wrath*, able to explore their "living truth" from different angles, which reaped the richer harvest.

Dovzhenko, of course, can pull it off, since his art is deeply rooted and its alignment with the given "living truth" comes effortlessly. Like Bresson, he can perform the miracle of making a saint out of a pickpocket in a single shot. His Ivan may stand dwarfed against the sky, but one accepts the image as part of the world of an exceptional artist. The *leitmotif* of death returns again and again, heroically brought to terms

with the New Life. As the 'planes pierce the sky, or the rattling machines build a gigantic dam in the spellbinding overtures to *Aerograd* and *Ivan*, the universal meets the immediate, the Russian the Soviet, and thus the shackles of direct propaganda are loosened. This is perhaps the only way in which one can enjoy a state of continuous solemnity. And, paradoxically, it takes a highly individual artist to create sufficiently "impersonal" types. *Shchors'* vision is so powerful, for instance, that when after a distant battle scene we are suddenly brought close to a group of characters (whom we have never seen before in the film) for a quick meeting or farewell, we encounter them as people we already know. Once the concrete/symbolic, closed/unconstrained conception of a Dovzhenko film has been established, he can do what he wants with us. We are under his spell.

Not that this spell remains unbroken. And it is interesting to note that an artist of such vision and energy spent a period as long as nine years (between *Earth* and *Shchors*) in hesitant exploration. To me, both *Ivan* (1932) and *Aerograd* (1935-6) remain remarkable failures; and it is only time and a periodic re-viewing which will determine whether in the monumental poetic continuity and daring visual abstraction of *Arsenal* (1928) we are greeting the forerunner of *Hiroshima, mon Amour*, or merely a verbose and dusty, though occasionally brilliant, curiosity. *Aerograd* has its visual symphonies and moments deeply planted in the fertile Ukrainian soil; but the flat and academic scenes drag it down. The first half of *Ivan* is a splendidly devised visual ballet of machines and people, an Empire in the making through its Fragments. But audiences are probably slightly mystified when, halfway through, the picture changes into something completely different: a would-be abstract psychological comedy drama. The typical Dovzhenko visual fresco, it seems to me, just fails to emerge from these diverse elements. But the films deserve more attention than they have been given in the pre-fabricated praise of the textbooks.

Another chronically over-estimated film of the period is Nikolai Ekk's *Road to Life* (1931), the story of the rehabilitation of a group of young thieves through their work on a railway construction job. To the textbooks, this may be an expressive example of how the Soviet cinema tried to come to terms with sound (and in this context the final scenes remain outstanding), or how certain clumsy elements of Western *mise en scène* and even circus (Mayakovsky's *commedia dell'arte* and Youtkevich's "Factory of the Eccentric Actor" were still around the corner) are built into the picture. (Fades are done by strange "intellectual" filters; when one of the boys strikes his empty belly, we hear the grotesque beat of a kettle drum.) But the praise seems excessive for a film which applies the most elaborate and coolly intellectual methods to its pursuit of a rough humanity.

Mikhail Romm's *Boule de Suif* (made, as late as 1934, as a silent film) is also clearly influenced by French and German stylisation and by Dreyerian close-ups. But these match the story; and the visual conception—claustrophobic, satirical and pathetic—is beautifully realised. Less well known than Ekk's film, and on a smaller scale, this remains much more fresh, at the same time more modern and more classic in its style. Perhaps it is time to publish revised editions of our sacrosanct academic texts: there is only one thing more exciting than evaluating films—re-evaluating them.

* * *

After much exploratory work and repeated checks, at last in 1934 the first all-talkie, from top-to-toe positive Bolshevik hero was born: *Chapayev*. The two Vassiliev's grasped the rough pathos, the fundamental tenets of the time. In a different vein, Dziga-Vertov's interesting, though vastly overrated, *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934) seems to be a forerunner of *Triumph of the Will*. After an insignificant "First Song", and a beautifully economical Second, the "Third Song" is a real Teutonic hymn to Communism. Vertov's creed here is about



The Soviet lyric hero: "The Youth of Maxim".

as self-delusive as Riefenstahl's. In one scene, a troop of enthusiastic parachutists leap gloriously from aeroplanes; and one cannot help toying with the idea that if only a single parachute failed to open, the entire glorified structure of the film would collapse in a moment.

Chapayev succeeded because it deals with the restless, inquisitive, fallible human being: he becomes a hero through his uncertainties. He is a man full of vanity, ignorance, ambition, a would-be leader who fears death. And the way he gets the better of himself, achieving a tough but humane heroism, gives the film horizons outside itself. For the first time, the enemy becomes a match for the hero. *The Youth of Maxim*, made in the same year by Kozintsev and Trauberg as the first part of a trilogy, also approaches the Party line via an essentially humane concept. Maxim is a Till Eulenspiegel of the Russian proletariat, stepping out of an early twentieth-century folk tale. His story—his first realisation of the class conflict; his entanglement with the illegal movement—is as truthful and consequently as uplifting as anything in the Gorki trilogy or Wajda's *A Generation*. With its brilliant little set pieces (such as the worker's funeral in the smoky machine



room), and a sense of period both realistic and stylised, it can be at once painfully nostalgic and grimly effective in its denunciations.

Raizman's *The Last Night* (1937) is full of its own nostalgia for pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg, which comes through in a strongly stylised pictorial beauty. The last scene, in which the frightening mass of a train rolls slowly, like a dragon, into the deserted station, and nobody knows whether it hides friends or enemies, is perhaps the most expressive image this revolutionary cinema ever produced. Dzigan's *We from Kronstadt* (1936) works almost entirely through such visual stylisation. The strange opening reels, with their hearty sailors and formalised camera set-ups, owe much to Meyerhold, and would have been impossible to conceive a few years later. And this seems the most effective way to put across a revolutionary message, with a fair hope that it will outlive its immediate period.

There are also in this period a few recurring stereotypes: the serious middle-aged man with a soft hat and dark overcoat, scuttling into doorways and bringing orders "from above"; action scenes in the tradition of the Western, where wounds never bleed and rescue always arrives just in time. But these are acceptable conventions in the revolutionary cinema, which can be ideological and adventurous, absorbed and frivolous, at the same time. Their robust, masculine brand of romanticism was something that had not been achieved anywhere before. This was serious, exploratory film-making in full, exciting swing. Loaded with clichés, it was able at the same time to sketch in the whole atmosphere of 1917 with a single well-timed shot from a distant cannon, echoing along the deserted streets of St. Petersburg.

* * *

In the second half of the Thirties, the time of discord, of doubts, of the great Party trials, this adaptable and creative method was overshadowed by something altogether more stiff and cautious. With Romm's two biographies of Lenin (*Lenin in October*, 1937; *Lenin in 1918*, 1939) the characters of the two leaders appear for the first time—and, not by accident, in the years when Stalin was laying the foundations of his personal dictatorship.

It was the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution. But it was no longer possible to risk another "insecure" work such as Eisenstein's ten-year-old *October*. The demand was for impersonality, didactic accuracy. Eisenstein had just suffered his greatest humiliations and the suspension of his *Bezhin Meadow*; Isaac Babel, Meyerhold, Tretyakov were under fire; "formalistic ambitions in the theatre" were denounced; and the intellectual atmosphere was charged with doubts, or with a blind, bombastic Party loyalty. People were queuing up to see the few third-rate escapist Western comedies that were shown; solemn congresses in the Kremlin ended with the whole audience singing the shepherd's march from *The Jazz Comedy*—and, meanwhile, *Pravda* denounced Shostakovich's opera as "noisy" and "vociferous".

As a result, Romm's two pictures became flat *tableaux vivants*, with "added human interest", deficient alike in depth, movement or personality. Foreshadowing the sad promise of the dogmatic Fifties, they show where the course of the "Mouthpiece of the Central Committee" could lead. Subtitles pop up every five minutes to give the films the history-book quality whose air of strict accuracy will exclude any possible element of mistrust. And so, before the lively, fictional popular hero could take the centre of the stage, another group of saints had entered the screen from the opposite side: saints whose behaviour, clothing, gestures, speech, must be measured and approved by the various departments in charge. If Lenin's shoe-laces had come undone in the corridor of the Smolny, one

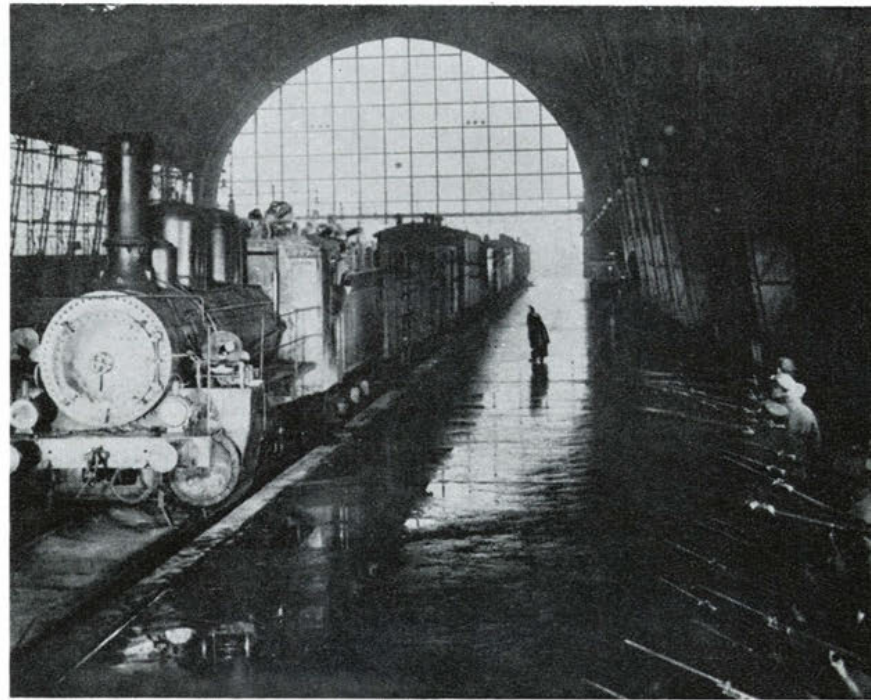
Benevolent autocracy: in "The Vyborg Side", the third part of the Maxim trilogy, Lenin and Stalin alter the note Maxim has left to ensure him an extra hour's sleep.

feels that it would have been treated as an offence against historical accuracy . . . Not, of course, that these images of the leaders did not strive for informality: we see Lenin and Stalin peeling potatoes; playing with children; ensuring Maxim a longer night's sleep; Lenin disguised as a man suffering from toothache. And if a few of the *tableaux* do come to life (Lenin's hide-out in the country, the attempt on his life) this is basically because of the undeniable magic of seeing "Lenin" on the screen, as personified by the inimitable Shchukin. Stalin remains discreetly in the background, with a smile beneath his moustache that is sly, wise and mysterious at the same time. While Lenin is making a speech, he takes notes, the correct thing for the disciple to do. He must have needed this image in those days, to pave the way towards the Fifties when he will appear in a white uniform, surrounded by the praise of the world's proletariat. But here he is still taking notes; studying the way it should be done.

The monumental achievement of this period, and at the same time the most controversial and revealing work, is undoubtedly Friedrich Ermler's twenty-six reel, two-part mass of film: *The Great Citizen*. The fictionalised story deals with the role of Kirov, the "Favourite of the Party" during the period of industrialisation, the fight against the enemy within, and with his final assassination. ("Favourite", in fact, to such an extent that Stalin had to get rid of him and then find scapegoats to begin the great Party purge around 1935.) The film was made immediately after the end of the trials in 1937, under indescribably difficult conditions of Party warfare. The script was revised again and again; responsible officials were sacked, others were arrested or executed as "enemies of the people". This was the biggest of all the prestige propaganda films; a psychological portrait of a real Bolshevik, his tragic moral victory and the breakdown of his neurotic enemies; a seemingly sober and accurate account of what had allegedly happened.

But this is used by Ermler as basis for a film of contained passion: a typical case of anti-*mise en scène* turned into something no less authentically cinematic. "Because much of the theme was developed through philosophical and ideological dialogue," wrote Catherine de la Roche, "Ermler wanted uninterrupted continuity in each scene . . . and wanted both camerawork and cutting to remain unnoticeable. The camera angles were from the audience's viewpoint." Clearly, Ermler had the courage to look this most difficult subject straight in the eye and to present it in the sharpest way in the sharpest political circumstances. His players achieve the highest level of screen acting: Bogoliubov is Shakhov, as Laydu was the Country Priest. And in its seriousness and determination *The Great Citizen* compares only with Bresson's film, however different the concepts. This is perhaps the utmost limit of conviction, restraint and assurance that a propaganda film can achieve. For many viewers it may be the biggest bore of them all—but as a tragic manifestation of an artist's dedication, his attempt to follow a cause and serve it to the utmost of his power, the film remains a uniquely moving document.

For the latest revision of Soviet Party history has revealed that the truth is *exactly contrary* to what the film portrays. Every scene can be turned around and given an opposite meaning in the light of this single revelation—and who knows how many more revelations there are to come? A simple scene in which Shakhov-Kirov, tired and momentarily depressed by the struggle against the fifth column, stands under a huge portrait of Stalin, as though gaining new strength from it, takes on an extraordinary pathos. We are witnessing the fabrication of a lie. And the shot in which one of the assassins



"The Last Night": ". . . the train rolls slowly into the station, and nobody knows whether it hides friends or enemies."

(a henchman of Zinoviev and Kameniev, of course) passes his victim's bier, becomes the only really true moment in the whole five-hour film. All this is tragic and painful because we are dealing with the deeply honest work of an artist who had faith—and who was fatally, villainously cheated. And yet, on the surface, his work looks accomplished, genuine, true . . .

* * *

Or does it? Can a durable artistic truth be achieved when the historical "truth" behind it is basically dishonest? Isn't an artist's lie even more inexcusable than a politician's? Does the Soviet artist really believe in what he is doing; does he want to believe in order to convince himself; or is he simply afraid *not* to believe? Do these films endeavour genuinely to aid the régime, or are they merely time-serving? The process is as mysterious and complex as its background. I recall seeing a scene from the 1949 *Fall of Berlin* in about half a dozen different versions: it was that of the dinner party, in which all the (fictionalised) members of the Central Committee take part. Any time a member of the (real life) Committee fell out, the relevant shots had to be omitted, until finally the whole film became just a sad document in the archives. And isn't it painful and ridiculous that a considerable proportion of these classics of patriotic film-making can now be seen only in the West, because in their country of origin their public screening is not at present "constructive"?

It is the demonstration of a truly great cinema that in an atmosphere so clouded with falsification, offering so little firm ground for the artist, it was possible in those years to create such reassuring and limitless works as Donskoi's Gorki trilogy. It is the Gorkian conception of humanism that carries this cinema forward. We need the pranks of a Maxim, the toughness of a Chapayev, the doubts and faithful service of a Great Citizen. They will stay with us even if the Minitruth has a thousand times revised the circumstances which brought them to life.



Chris Marker's "Description d'un Combat".

BOOK REVIEWS

CHRIS MARKER'S COMMENTARIES

WELL, EVEN IF LITTLE ELSE, it's fun these days. Hard-thinking youths in Japan, Brazil and Columbia University bury themselves in Robbe-Grillet. We can almost visualise an ever broadening dictatorship of the intellectually chic; and to such trends, of course, films lend themselves even better than novels. The odds are on a highly fanciful posterity, if not on no posterity whatever. Fashion supersedes fashion (e.g. SIGHT AND SOUND ten best films in 1952 and 1962). Our own French experiments, welcome though they are on several counts, do perhaps amount to what they naïvely claim to be: a *nouvelle vague*. The expression, incidentally, was first popularised in a fatuous bit of reporting on the younger generation. No wonder the gifted new people are a bit undecided about what they'll attempt next. Following the pleasing improvisations which, through a fine display of nervous energy, gave a distinct appeal to, say, *Breathless*, Godard is reported to be embarking next on a film from a highly elaborate script. Truffaut himself, after slightly clumsy autobiographical beginnings, now seems to pile up wholly unrelated good films. The trade press credits him with a forthcoming essay in science fiction. So the main impression is of talents in a whirlwind, while our one film-maker with what almost amounts to a planetary concern remains oddly in the background of international cinephilia.

Despite the deceptive pseudonym, Chris Marker, he's French all right, although he seems to be ever circling around, and from unexpected angles looking us up, his people, *petit bourgeois* that we are. What his inner compulsion is, I do not know. I believe the enigma could be explained in terms of the squirrel impatient of its cage.

In short, he's that very rare bird, the writer cum cineaste. Perhaps it is worth recalling that the old dichotomy has not receded so very

much. Truffaut has introduced whole passages from the novel into *Jules et Jim*, although the fine film that results stands on its own. Resnais, while fairly unique in making good use of a pictorial *donnée*, insists that he needs a writer (he is, incidentally, a remarkably modest man). Raymond Queneau, Marguerite Duras, Robbe-Grillet have all worked with him; and so has Chris Marker, his friend for many years. Their collaboration in *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (a polemical essay on African art, filled with neat anti-colonialist implications) must have been too involved, too intricate for an outsider to appreciate. It is the text of this film which opens *Commentaires**, the book of Marker's collected scripts.

I do not know of a book on the cinema in which word and picture are so happily blended. The make-up itself is alert, varied, inventive. Indeed, *Commentaires* puts to shame both those scripts which are published as if the stills were merely illustrative material and whatever stray attempts have been made at reproducing stills without a reasonable textual support. Perhaps only Chris Marker could have brought it off, though it came as no surprise to those who have known him in his former editorial capacity with Editions du Seuil, where he was mostly concerned with books on foreign countries. He has himself written occasional verse and a novel, *Le Coeur Net*, a slightly mythical affair about an airman, tense yet sometimes sentimental.

Before *Les Statues Meurent Aussi*, Chris Marker had shot a short piece on the Helsinki Olympic Games, which he has left out of *Commentaires* presumably as an unworthy beginning (the equipment used, on 16mm., was absurdly poor). Following African art, then, we come upon his own ventures as a film-maker in widely disparate countries: *Dimanche à Pékin*, *Lettre de Sibérie*, *Description d'un Combat* (Israel) and *Cuba Si!* He has also included the script of another film not shot by him, *L'Amérique Rêve*: an appealing, bitter-sweet chronicle, a commentary which he wrote for François Reichenbach's *L'Amérique Insolite*. The director used it in a piecemeal, idiosyncratic way. The writer now takes his elegant revenge by declaring that he'd choose Reichenbach to film his text.

What Marker brings to his work is the slowly matured vision of a poet. To support his wide-ranging curiosity he calls on a childhood nurtured I imagine on Jules Verne and Lewis Carroll, and a miscellany of his other favourite authors: Henri Michaux, Blaise Cendrars and Giraudoux (on whom he has written his only critical essay). The attentive reader of *Commentaires* may even ponder over an admiring reference to Edith Sitwell. His film reporting is in truth informed by a whole dreamland of cross-references, by the private vision. As could perhaps have been expected, this is especially noticeable in *L'Amérique Rêve*, with its implicit double standard of approach. "Ainsi l'Amérique rêve. Le prisonnier dans sa prison, le voyageur dans ses photos, le nègre dans son carnaval, la jeune fille dans ses projets, l'homme dans ses souvenirs." In these images and words, each country stands out as it should and must, real and surrealist.

A semi-humorous love of science fiction is there too, as befits one who once wholeheartedly admired Jules Verne's band of heroes, not just the one and only Phineas Fogg. Chris Marker is indeed the only genuinely twentieth century Frenchman I know. His films are bright, humorous, tender, off-hand, discreet (although not without private jokes), never cynical. Word and image are so closely intertwined, so at one, that it is nugatory to disentangle one from the other, although perhaps the attempt has to be made. The text, then, covers a highly varied register, including the amiable jibe, the pun, the mock verse, reminiscent at times of Queneau's attempts to infuse life into a language which too easily becomes stilted. Much the same can be said of images which at times make one see what in other films is merely obvious, and to that extent blinding. The director keeps a captivated camera on a girl's sensitive face in *Description d'un Combat*, or discovers a Siberian nitwit who looks as though he were André Gide's twin, or devises (also in *Lettre de Sibérie*) a quick-witted satire on publicity cartoons. All the way, in all his films, he seems to improvise his essential visual rhetoric in this unique and elegant manner. Yet he's only a beginner, and will insist that he is, as each artist should during his life span. He is also a highly elusive man, and now going through what I've written I feel indeed that some readers will think I'm discussing some imaginary cineaste. No doubt, for instance, that a dedicated interest in documentaries does not necessarily command a liking for a man who shows cats around the world simply because of his fondness for cats: but there you are.

All this is not to say that I swallow his whole *oeuvre* so far in one huge, uncritical gulp. For one thing, he's made much progress, notably in technique, so that *Description d'un Combat* puts somewhat

*Editions du Seuil, Paris.

in the shade the stimulating *Lettre de Sibérie*. My main reservation, though, has to do with the political outlook; not that I disagree with his forceful, liberal views (in British terms, not unlike those of *The New Statesman*), but the stylish, sentimental approach somewhat simplifies the matter at hand, particularly it seems to me in *Cuba Si!* (This, at least, was my impression on reading the script, since it is the one film I have not yet been able to see.) One wishes all was right with Cuba, yet Marker's neat balancing of rhetorics leaves one in some doubt, with a feeling of "yes, but . . . ?" Perhaps it is wrong to expect a poet to act the shrewd political reporter.

It is, on second thoughts, understandable that Marker should be, not underrated (that he is not), but insufficiently known. Much nonsense has been written on the cinema as the universal medium. That it was, in the glorious miming days of Chaplin, and that it still is in insipid travelogues. But in other fields the response remains partly conditioned by the language group—which covers, of course, more than the language itself. For all our present day pretentiousness, it is too much to expect the pictorial subject-matter to be trapped in an informed, lively, poetical vein for a whole semi-sophisticated international audience. Yet we'd be the poorer without attempts such as these. Chris Marker, of course, carries on. He must be provisionally settling in another outlandish region of this twentieth century one world, our unknown cosmonaut. Certainly from my own nineteenth century backwardness I admire him.

JEAN QUEVAL

DESIGN IN MOTION, by John Halas and Roger Manvell. Illustrated. (Studio Books, 75s.)

WITH NEARLY 400 ILLUSTRATIONS, this is virtually a record in stills of the animated film. The book glances briefly at the origins of approaches to the presentation of form and movement in art—primitive, Egyptian, Greek, 15th century—and then proceeds to its main purpose, a survey of different styles in animated design today. Entertainment films receive most attention, though examples from commercials made for television are also quoted; and there is the appropriate inclusion of animated credit-titles such as Saul Bass's for *Anatomy of a Murder*. The text is informative, although it seems to involve itself rather unnecessarily with "time", and in a way that may suggest that this is a mysterious, potent ingredient in the making of animated drawings. It is at its best where it explains the sources of cartoon, the various types of design that are to be found in modern work from nearly twenty countries, and some of the considerations that affect the choice of style. But text and illustrations are not quite sufficiently interlinked.

On the illustration side there are points at which the material seems to lack adequate correlation and others where it might have



"A man who shows cats around the world simply because of his fondness for cats . . ." "Description d'un Combat".

benefited by fuller captioning. There is also rather more than is really useful from U.S. commercials, and, with all their merits, from Yugoslav cartoons. To put animated film on display certainly demands quantity; may one suggest that there could have been a pruning, however, and that this might have helped to lessen the cost.

BERNARD ORNA

BOOKS RECEIVED

- ANGER AND AFTER. By John Russell Taylor (Methuen, 30s.)
 DJAVULENS ANSIKTE: INGMAR BERGMANS FILMER. By Jörn Donner. (Bokforlaget Aldus, Stockholm. 8.50 kronor.)
 INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS FILMS. By Leopold Stork. (Phoenix, 35s.)
 LESSONS WITH EISENSTEIN. By Vladimir Nizhny. (Allen and Unwin, 25s.)

EVERY YEAR IN MARIENBAD

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even more satisfactory, as it avoids the age discrepancy which could be visually repellent to some spectators. The girl's fear of love, her hesitation until the last minute, become much clearer. The last scene on the bed between her and her guardian, which was moving but obscure, becomes far more upsetting. We understand better why she still loves him as a brother, while she does not love him any more as a "husband", and is already prepared to leave him. The whole relationship, oddly distant and yet intimate, now makes sense.

Another peculiarity of the film has been pointed out by several critics: the disturbing contrast between the frozen atmosphere of the setting and postures, and the latent hysteria perceptible under the restrained dialogue in the convulsive attitudes of Delphine Seyrig. This is probably one of the most fascinating aspects of *Marienbad*, but it remained also one of the most intriguing. If, as I believe, the relationship between the three main characters is derived from such an incestuous situation, the mood of artificially stilted emotion becomes not only understandable but fitting and necessary.

The game of matches, cards or dominoes, not only echoes the triangle situation (like the trees and alleys of the park) but it also parallels the guardian's position. He always wins, but at the same time he loses, and the game expresses his forebodings; his adversary always takes the last match, as he will in the end take the girl away.

Does all this preclude other interpretations of *Last Year in Marienbad*? I don't think so. I only mean that any valid interpretation must take into account the relative amount of certainty contained in the preceding pages. My only purpose was to eliminate the apparently gratuitous, and to push back uncertainties as far as possible into their last entrenchments. There and only there, not before, begins the realm of shadow where speculations are permitted. Many have been suggested which do not necessarily clash with my theory. The "incestuous" theory may even lead to another interpretation according to which the character played by Pitoëff could be the Narrator himself under another dream-disguise (perhaps his Super Ego!)*

I shall not venture into symbolic interpretations myself, although I would welcome some more. But do we really need them? When we have exhausted all the possible interpretations that are at the moment only faint gleams in our minds, we shall be tempted to dismiss *Marienbad* and forget about it. I still enjoy being haunted by this film as I never was by any film; I still hope to see it many times and preserve its polyvalent ambiguities. They are the ambiguities of life itself.

*Since I wrote the above, I see that Mr. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has reached a similar hypothesis, although the other way round, starting from a Freudian interpretation (*New Left Review* No. 13-14). It should have prevented him from stating that "there is no meaning in the images". A multiplicity of meanings is indeed very different from "no meaning"

CORRESPONDENCE

Nature of Film

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—It seems to me that Pauline Kael is wrong about Kracauer's *Nature of Film*. She is perfectly justified in finding his style pedantic and dogmatic. It certainly is. But I believe she throws out the baby with the bath-water in dismissing his plea for the permanent importance of the documentary nature of film. However badly Kracauer puts the case, he is, nevertheless, striving in his own peculiar way to establish a principle important to all art—let alone film.

What, for example, is so difficult about the proposition that "films are true to the medium to the extent that they penetrate the world before our eyes" or that we expect to find the raw material of art visible in the finished work? Am I alone in finding that the films I admire most tend precisely to fulfil both these requirements? I cannot think of anything more untimely, in 1962, than Pauline Kael's defence of fantasy and the cinema of Cocteau, or her definition of Art as "the greatest game, the supreme entertainment."

Of course it always seems that documentary in its pure form is dying because the best exponents of the genre always move on to something else. The case of Alain Resnais is salutary. *Last Year in Marienbad* is the perfect example of fantasy at its most objectionable—over wrought, private and pretentiously enigmatic. On the other hand, I shall not quickly forget Resnais' earlier short films like *Nuit et Brouillard*. The same goes for the work of Humphrey Jennings. And I think I know why. These films are all highly imaginative, even poetical, but not at all *about* imaginary worlds. They are rooted, so to speak, in the historical actuality of their images. I quite agree that documentary has become synonymous with "unfortunate social conditions" and "the superior virtue of the oppressed," but this still doesn't mean that dear old Kracauer is fundamentally wrong in his conviction about the nature of film—however ridiculous his tone of voice may appear.

The Oxford Dictionary describes a 'document' as 'something that furnishes evidence', and 'evidence' as 'facts available as proof'. Doesn't this provide us with a far more exact and exciting clue to the importance of the documentary principle to film, or any other medium?

Yours faithfully,
COLIN MOFFAT

7, Portland Road,
Birmingham 16.

SIR,—Miss Kael's "I want something else" calls to mind another horridly theoretical work, *The Name and Nature of Poetry*: "If a man is insensible to poetry, it does not follow that he gets no pleasure from poems. Poems very seldom consist of poetry and nothing else; and pleasure can be derived also from their other ingredients. I am convinced that most readers, when they think that they are admiring poetry, are deceived by inability to analyse their sensations, and that they are really admiring, not the poetry of the passage before them, but something else in it, which they like better than poetry."

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD GRIFFITHS

The Museum of Modern Art,
New York 19,
U.S.A.

Putting Caps on Bottles

SIR,—Penelope Houston's brief review of Billy Wilder's *One, Two, Three* in the Spring 1962 issue of SIGHT AND SOUND ascribes to the director's "cynicism" some attitudes in the film that seem to me the demonstrations of an achieved comic despair. This is not to pretend that all the poor things Miss Houston notices are good; but it is to suggest that the film is frequently artful, making meaning out of its gimmicks (if not always out of its gags) and even out of its bad-taste sophistication.

In a pervasive way the film reduces nations and institutions to the compass of the things they produce or the silly things that symbolise them. To name a few: for the Coca-Cola Company there are new franchises and, of course, the product; for the Soviet Union there are political portraits and disintegrating cars (but successful space

ships); for the United States there are the Coca-Cola Company, Coca-Cola on the first successful (Russian) space ship to Venus, and a presentation clock with Uncle Sam instead of a cuckoo to emerge on the hour to the tune of "Yankee Doodle"; West Berlin turns even its people into things as they achieve precise automatic loyalty to the Coca-Cola office for which they work. This last seems especially important, for the German office staff manages more complete company identification than its American boss—in spite of his having sold himself, as he says, to his firm for fifteen years (selling people is a favourite game; by the time she has arrived from Atlanta the big executive's daughter has already raffled off a night of her attentions among the crew of her airplane). So far as the film has a point to make, it is that such identification with company or country leads to a displacement of identity and is in tricky ways always humanly degrading.

Berlin as a kind of no-nation between absolute powers is the privileged place to live—if only one can hold one's head above the accumulation of small power symbols. Admiration in this context is for momentary human victories over things, in the film's two best sequences: as Cagney races through an office cluttered with clothing, picking and rejecting for the boss's son-in-law, a master of sophisticated decisions in a world of symbolic objects; and as Lilo Pulver shakes the East Berlin hotel with her sexy table top dance, shedding clothes, making things—chess pieces—move to her time, and helping a thing conspire with history to betray the Soviet Union, as a portrait of Khrushchev slips down from its frame to reveal underneath a portrait of Stalin—a grubby past and a sellout on the other side to match Cagney's on this.

Lilo Pulver's sexiness is more than a comic delight; the film sees it as just about the least tainted quality around. Not only does it shake up a few sacred symbols; it also enforces a hopeful suppression of national and institutional allegiance in whoever has the luck to follow her. To give her up is to descend into normal home life, a terrifying alternative which means, in addition to wife and child and child's little things, an implicit denial of masculine sexuality. But the family wins most of the time . . . Cagney's very success in accumulating the signs of traditional respectability around his creation betrays him into banishment to Atlanta, Georgia (America has its Siberia too) and a home office position as vice-president in charge of putting caps on bottles. If I understand my Coca-Cola bottle symbolism correctly (lusty Russian soldiers break the tops off bottles with a flourish), this is total defeat.

Ominously none of the extra-societal vigour of an idealised life as roving executive man of the world or as impoverished prospective inheritor of the world survives into the film's final "comic" assertion of approved social norms. Deported to one Siberia or another; forced into a pair of pants and a phoney aristocratic heritage—men fail while wives and companies and countries succeed. Though a puffing Cagney may prance among them for a while, things are overwhelming at last—or would be if it weren't that the more of them there are the smaller they seem to get. One, two, three isn't just an easy snap of the fingers; it is also the way little things add up—children, clothes, the parts of a disintegrating car, a nine-pack to replace the six-pack carton of Coca-Cola, and ultimately the most of the least—bottle caps.

Yours faithfully,
ROGER GREENSPUN

Connecticut College,
New London, Connecticut,
U.S.A.

Pickpocket

SIR,—In his article, *Novel, novel; Fable, fable?*, Richard Roud takes me to task for my review of Bresson's *Pickpocket*. In measuring this film by the yardstick of realism, he claims, I have failed to understand its governing convention, for *Pickpocket* is, in fact, "a non-realistic allegory(?) or fable."

What Mr. Roud means by this statement is difficult to understand, since his use of the concept of realism is as eccentric and obscure as his use of such concepts as allegory, fable and masterpiece. At one point in his argument he appears to identify realism with what he describes as "the aesthetic of the nineteenth-century novel" (whatever that may mean) and at another point he sees it as a species of "literalism".

Having rather wildly spun these verbal cobwebs, Mr. Roud then ambles forward to catch, as it were, his aimless fly. His *Pickpocket*, far from being realistic, is a moral allegory, a handbag—to change the metaphor—of Roman Catholic truisms, "sufficiently non-realistic and depersonalised for us to be free to interpret the problem (it) poses in our own terms." (Surely *Pickpocket* is not as vague and therefore as bad a film as this would suggest?)

This reading of the film seems as off-the-mark as it would be to see it in terms of realism. The truth in fact is that it is impossible to describe the convention within which *Pickpocket* works (as Mr. Roud indirectly admits when he writes of it as a "non-realistic allegory or fable"); and this, I suggest, was my main contention with the film. Mr. Roud assumes that I found it a failure because I rejected the convention chosen by M. Bresson, when in fact I saw the film's failure to arise from his having ignored the nature of conventions in general.

To put this more simply: when you set out to make a film (or write a novel or play) you soon find that your material sparks off a large number of questions, many of which are irrelevant to your intention. As an artist, it is part of your function then to frame the work in such a way that these irrelevant questions are suppressed, while the ones that interest you remain open to exploration. This, as I understand it, is the process by which conventions are established.

My argument was that Bresson expressly fails to establish a convention (though whether he is deliberate in this I hesitate to say) since in *Pickpocket* questions arise—as for instance over the confusing and contradictory explanations given for Michel's past—which in their context demand a realistic answer and which Bresson refuses either to suppress or to reply to. Naturally one is perplexed, and it is because of this perplexity that I saw Bresson as taking on the role of God. For God, if He exists, is distinguished in part by His indifference to conventions, to His delight, one might say, in teasing us with unanswerable questions. And why God (and therefore M. Bresson) fails as an artist, is, I think, explained by my concluding quotation from Sartre.

Yours faithfully,
ERIC RHODE

3, Clifton Gardens,
London, W.9.

Time of the Heathen

SIR,—Kindly relay to Miss Croce, your New York correspondent, that the film *Time of the Heathen* which she mentions in the Spring 1962 issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, is not a "war story of the Pacific". It is essentially a story about a homicidal farmer and his cowardly son chasing a tormented wanderer and a little coloured mute across what appears to be the entire American countryside . . .

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT BURG

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U.S.A.

SLING THE LAMPS LOW

continued from page 139

larger imagination of directors directly involved in the present social situation, the overall picture that emerges from them and from the main body of his work is still deeper and more personally imaginative, once one probes the seemingly ritual surfaces, than the usual Hollywood one of popular wish-fulfilment. Through characteristic paradoxes Hawks mediates to a modern world sated on well-meaning, ill-argued problem films the more sceptical counsels of the unaffected sophisticate. And he does so entertainingly, with none of that falling-off (*Rio Bravo* is as technically fresh as *Scarface*) which has made the later work of his contemporaries, Hathaway, Wellman, Walsh, so disappointing. One is as struck by his survival as one is by his continually intelligent mistrust of the rationalism of more eminent directors like Zinnemann and Kramer. It is the socially campaigning classics of the Thirties and Forties which seem to date today; *Scarface* still works where *Little Caesar* doesn't. And, by the same token, it may well be that *Rio Bravo* and *The Big Sky* and *The Big Sleep* will still look fresher in twenty years than many more written-up theses of the same period. Finding their own freedom of expression from within Hawks's candidly confessed limitations, they deliver their own, albeit unconscious, reflections of various aspects of the life and longings of their time; reflections at once more curt, more tangled, and yet more truthful than those thrown up by any number of "responsible" works.

LUIS BUNUEL AND VIRIDIANA

continued from page 118

the same sort of pictorial vigour as Figueroa, and the same ability to visualise the anti-beautiful beauty of Buñuel's conceptions.

With Buñuel, one never feels that technique is something interposed between conception and execution. Problems of *mise en scène* seem to have no more existence for him than do problems of technique in a sketch by Picasso or Goya. Grandly independent of conventional techniques as of conventional ideas, Buñuel seems to have the ability simply to put pictures on the screen with the accuracy and certainty of a good paperhanger sticking up paper. Largely this is due to the assurance and precision of his conceptions. "If I plan and shoot two hundred and fifty shots, then two hundred and fifty shots appear in the finished film." A friend described his work on *Viridiana* thus: "Before each shot he would wander about with a viewer, all by himself, for half-an-hour, lining up and planning the shot while the crew sat drinking. Then he'd go over and say 'Right: this is what I want.' Then they'd go and get the shot, while he sat drinking."

Thank God—I am still an atheist.

If Buñuel's creative life had ceased with *L'Age d'Or*, he would have had a safe place in film history. That film revealed unforeseen possibilities in the cinema for surrealism, for anarchy, for philosophy, for anger. Succeeding works in Mexico and in France represent a body of work which few directors have paralleled, but never excelled the first, extraordinary feature film. Now Buñuel has made his second masterpiece, his most authoritative work: "The second pole," in the words of Ado Kyrrou, his most fervent admirer, "which sustains the wonderful Buñuel edifice."

The quotations from Buñuel are taken from a number of magazine interviews.

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COLUMBIA/OPEN ROAD FILMS for *The Victors*.
WARNER BROTHERS for *The Big Sleep*.
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ASSOCIATED BRITISH PICTURES for *The Punch and Judy Man*.
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COMPTON/SEBRICON for *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, *Cléo de 5 à 7*.
MIRACLE FILMS for *Viridiana*.
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *Chronique d'un Été*.
BRITISH TRANSPORT FILMS for *Terminus*, *I am a Litter Basket*.
RICHARD WILLIAMS for *Guinness at the Albert Hall*, *Love Me, Love Me, Love Me*.
BIOGRAPHIC CARTOON FILMS for *The Plain Man's Guide to Advertising*.
UNIFRANCE FILM for *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*.
UNITALIA for *Divorzio all'Italiana*.
PARIS EUROPA FILM for *Le Procès*.
PARIS FILM/INTEROPA/CINERIZ for *The Eclipse*.
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GUSTAVO ALATRISTE PRODUCTIONS for *El Angel Exterminador*.
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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars

- BARABBAS** (BLC/Columbia) Latest, most morbid, and one of the most eclectic of current cycle of Italian Biblical spectacles, based on the Pär Lagerkvist novel. (Anthony Quinn, Vittorio Gassman, Jack Palance; director, Richard Fleischer. Technicolor, Technirama 70.)
- *****CHRONIQUE D'UN ÉTÉ** (Contemporary). Fascinating experiment by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, using non-actors, a hand-camera and simultaneously recorded sound to probe the surface of actuality. *Reviewed.*
- ****DEADLY COMPANIONS, THE** (Warner-Pathé) Loose, leisurely, revenge-motif Western, quite sharply acted, and directed by Sam Peckinpah with an affectionate eye for casual detail, splendidly caught in William Clothier's photography. (Maureen O'Hara, Brian Keith, Steve Cochran, Chill Wills. Pathé Color, Panavision.)
- ****EL CID** (Rank) Solemn pageant about the noble Spanish knight who united Moors and Christians under one king. A likeable cast struggles vainly with two-dimensional characters, and there is an arid hour or two between the film's highlight—a mounted, single-combat scene—and its final battle; but Anthony Mann's compositions are often pretty. (Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren, John Fraser. Technicolor, Super-Technirama 70.)
- ESCAPE FROM ZAHRAIN** (Paramount) A nationalist leader (Yul Brynner), a tough American embezzler (Jack Warden) and a shanghaied nurse (Madlyn Rhue) make a hazardous dash to freedom across the borders of a turbulent Arab state. Elementary adventure story, with borrowings from *Ice Cold in Alex* and *Wages of Fear*. (Sal Mineo, James Mason; director, Ronald Neame. Technicolor, Panavision.)
- ****FOLLOW THAT DREAM** (United Artists) Surprisingly effective as a L'il Abner who outwits the smarties, Elvis Presley strikes a blow for individual freedom in a crafty comedy which echoes Capra in his heyday. Recommended, despite flabby patches. (Arthur O'Connell; director, Gordon Douglas. DeLuxe Color, Panavision.)
- GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN EYES, THE** (Compton-Cameo) Updated version of the Balzac story about a fashion photographer, his lesbian associate and the mysterious, capricious girl of the title. The 24-year-old director, Jean-Gabriel Albicocco, obscures all feeling for the original by over-decoration and a mannered camera style. (Marie Laforêt, Paul Guers, Françoise Prévost.)
- HELL IS FOR HEROES** (Paramount). War story about a group of battle-weary GIs dug in near the Siegfried Line. Competent, with a good comedy performance by Bob Newhart, but obscure of intention. (Steve McQueen, Bobby Darin, Fess Parker; director, Don Siegel.)
- INSPECTOR, THE** (Fox) Clumsy attempt to blend a feverish suspense yarn with righteous indignation against Nazi persecution of the Jews. Some briefly moving moments, notably from Dolores Hart; but the bizarre escape-into-Palestine theme is beyond the ingenuity of director Philip Dunne. (Stephen Boyd, Leo McKern, Hugh Griffith. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)
- JESSICA** (United Artists) Angie Dickinson delivers the babies and upsets the equilibrium of a Sicilian village. Mildly frisky and phony Franco-Italian trifle, heavily handled by Jean Negulesco, and completely diminished by the ravishing Mediterranean locations. (Maurice Chevalier, Noël-Noël, Agnes Moorehead. Technicolor, Panavision.)
- *****JULES AND JIM** (Gala) Truffaut's story of two students in pre-World War I Paris, and of the woman they love, try to understand, and are finally defeated by. Looking more and more like the Renoir of his generation, Truffaut looks back with innocence, and a haunting nostalgia for lost happiness. (Jeanne Moreau, Oskar Werner, Henri Serre. FranScope.) *Reviewed.*
- ******LADY WITH THE LITTLE DOG, THE** (Contemporary) Magnificent adaptation of Chekhov's short story about the two lovers whose affair begins lightly on a Black Sea holiday, continues forlornly through snatched hotel meetings. Infallible Soviet period sense; and a most delicate visual approximation to the Chekhovian mood. (Alexei Batalov, Ya Savvina; director, Josif Heifits.)
- ****LEON MORIN, PRETRE** (Contemporary) Jean-Pierre Melville's intelligent but reserved account of a young agnostic's conversion to Catholicism and her love for a priest during the Nazi Occupation. A good visual rhythm; not much fervour. (Jean-Paul Belmondo, Emmanuelle Riva.)
- ****LIAISONS DANGEREUSES 1960, LES** (Gala) Contemporary version of Laclos' savage masterpiece which starts out as a comedy of seduction but winds up as a Bette Davis "strong drama"; Jeanne Moreau makes a splendid substitute for Miss Davis; and the energetic vulgarity of Roger Vadim's direction is apt enough in the rather disgraceful circumstances. (Gérard Philipe, Jeanne Valérie, Annette Vadim.) *Reviewed.*
- LOVERS MUST LEARN** (Warner-Pathé) Youth (Troy Donahue) and beauty (Suzanne Pleshette and Angie Dickinson) are exposed in long and yawning embrace throughout this sumptuous travel brochure about tourists in Italy. (Rossano Brazzi, Constance Ford; director, Delmer Daves. Technicolor.)
- MAGNIFICENT REBEL, THE** (Disney) Karl Boehm nobly impersonates Beethoven, with popular snatches from the master. Sincere, colourful little catalogue of clichés, produced by Disney in Germany. (Giulia Rubini, Ivan Desny; director, Georg Tressler. Technicolor.)
- MAN-TRAP** (Paramount) Heavy-handed suspense film about the miserable husband of a spoiled alcoholic, and the war buddy who involves him in crime. Too chaotic by far. (Jeffrey Hunter, David Janssen, Stella Stevens; director, Edmond O'Brien. Panavision.)
- ****MR. HOBBS TAKES A VACATION** (Fox) A descendant of Mr. Blandings of the Dream House, Mr. Hobbs shares his wildly inconvenient holiday home with an assortment of children, grandchildren and in-laws. Overlong; funny in spurts; enchanting performances by young Lauri Peters and a recalcitrant water-pump. (James Stewart, Maureen O'Hara, Fabian; director, Henry Koster. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)
- ****MUSIC MAN, THE** (Warner-Pathé) The bogus travelling salesman with the 76 trombones bounces through 19 numbers at a lick. Corny—but ripe, rumbustious and exciting, and played with charm and vitality by Robert Preston. (Shirley Jones, Hermione Gingold, Paul Ford; director, Morton Da Costa. Technicolor, Technirama.) *Reviewed.*
- ******MUSIC ROOM, THE** (Contemporary) Satyajit Ray's perceptive study of a decaying nobleman, done with grace and refinement in a haunting, slightly Gothic visual style. Made in between the more famous trilogy, but in no way minor. (Chabi Biswas.)
- MYSTERIOUS ISLAND** (BLC/Columbia) Jules Verne's Captain Nemo (Herbert Lom) surfaces again in a resourceful, if unsubtle, tale of four soldiers, a journalist and two shipwrecked British ladies on a South Sea island. Giant crabs, birds, a balloon, the Nautilus, etc. (Michael Craig, Michael Callan, Joan Greenwood, Gary Merrill; director, Cy Endfield, Eastman/Techni/Pathé Color, Superdynamation.)
- ****NOTORIOUS LANDLADY, THE** (Columbia). Dishevelled comedy about a young American diplomat and his Mayfair landlady, under heavy suspicion of murder. Accomplished playing by Jack Lemmon, and some bright, if over-extended ideas. (Kim Novak, Fred Astaire; director, Richard Quine.) *Reviewed.*
- PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, THE** (Rank). Pleasingly Gothic variation on Beauty (Heather Sears) and the Beast (Herbert Lom). The initial tension is soon dissipated by flat writing, but there is less gore and more charm than one usually expects to find in a Hammer Production. (Edward De Souza, Michael Gough; director, Terence Fisher. Technicolor.)
- ****REACH FOR GLORY** (Gala) Well-meaning but implausibly executed version of a novel, *The Custard Boys*, about the painful insecurities of youth in the face of relentless wartime propaganda. Fairly brutal, but somehow not very strong. (Harry Andrews, Kay Walsh, Michael Anderson, Jr.; director, Philip Leacock.)
- ****SNOBS** (Sebricon) Rancorous satire on the corruption, pettiness and general ugliness of the French Establishment. Jean-Pierre Mocky has ideas, but protests too much, too often, too clumsily. (Gérard Hoffman, Francis Blanche, Noël Roquevert, Elina Labourdette.)
- SOUTH PACIFIC** (Fox) High, wide and generally unhandsome version of the stage musical, stoddily directed by Joshua Logan. Happily the songs survive a welter of eccentric colour effects and jungle décor. (Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor, John Kerr. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)
- ****STATE FAIR** (Fox) This second musical remake of a Thirties Charles Farrell-Janet Gaynor romance has become in José Ferrer's hands a very so-so, old-fashioned affair. But Alice Faye's scenes are as tangy as her prize-winning mince meat, and Ann-Margret is bright and agreeable. (Pat Boone, Tom Ewell, Bobby Darin, Pamela Tiffin. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)
- ****SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH** (M-G-M) Emaciated, over-tidied adaptation of a far-out Tennessee Williams play about a beach-boy gigolo, a fading, drug-taking film star and a Deep South demagogue. Geraldine Page glitters, incongruously but quite magnificently, as the faded lady. (Paul Newman, Ed Begley, Shirley Knight; director, Richard Brooks. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)
- THAT TOUCH OF MINK** (Rank) Suave financier Cary Grant *versus* trim, inexperienced Doris Day in rather threadbare, cat-and-mouse sex comedy. (Gig Young; director, Delbert Mann. Eastman Colour, Panavision.)
- TIARA TAHITI** (Rank) Intermittently funny class clash between a social-climbing upstart and a well-bred wastrel. John Mills and James Mason play the game with obvious enjoyment, though the satire lacks edge and discipline. (Rosenda Monteros, Claude Dauphin, Herbert Lom; director, William Kotcheff. Eastman Colour.)
- ******UGETSU MONOGATARI** (Contemporary) The adventures of a potter, his wife, and a ghost princess during a civil war in the 16th century. The late and great Kenji Mizoguchi triumphantly creates and exquisitely composes a half-real, half-legendary world of rich, barbaric power. (Machiko Kyo, Mitsuko Mito, Kinuyo Tanaka.)
- VIOLENT ECSTASY** (Gala) Adolescent angst, water-skiing, sleeping-around and chicken-run tests of daring, all on the Riviera. Soggy. (Elke Sommer, Christian Pezey, Pierre Brice; director, Max Pécas. CinemaScope.)
- ******VIRIDIANA** (Miracle) Made—and banned—in Spain, this parable of destruction is Luis Buñuel's most complex, philosophically and technically consummate, film. (Silvia Pinal, Francisco Rabal, Fernando Rey.) *Reviewed.*
- ****WEST SIDE STORY** (United Artists) Strikingly mounted version of the Broadway musical which fails to bridge the gap between realistic backgrounds and Hollywoodian social rage, between dramatic dancing and tired echoes of Romeo and Juliet, between—in fact—theme and form. Fine playing by George Chakiris, Richard Beymer and Rita Moreno, but some of the others are disappointing. (Natalie Wood, Russ Tamblyn; directors, Robert Wise, Jerome Robbins. Technicolor, Panavision 70.)

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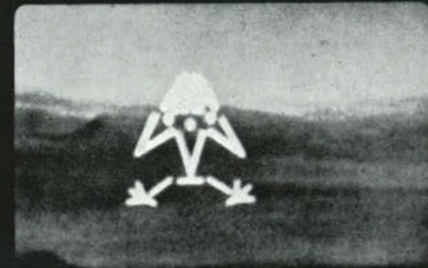
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